

Homosexuality

Some reflections based on the Bible passage: Romans 12:1-2

Overview: The sexual drive is a very powerful force in life. It can be both the source of pleasure and fulfillment, as well as confusion, discouragement and failure. It also takes on a variety of expressions; some considered normal, and others abnormal. For conservative, biblically faithful Christians who experience same-sex attraction, sex is a particular problem and dilemma. These Christians understand the Bible to view such behavior as immoral and sinful. Yet, they experience continuous same-sex attraction. What can they do? What should they do? What does God ask of such Christians? The passage from Romans 12:1-2 is used to elaborate the dilemma of SSA for such Christians and the biblical approach to resolution and management.

Sex is a very powerful instinct and drive in all mankind. It demands an outlet of expression. It is nearly impossible to deny altogether, and almost impossible for some people to control. The biological, emotional, psychological and chemical components of human sexuality unite in forming a strong and vigorous desire demanding involvement with whatever is sexually attractive. The demand for involvement may take the vicarious form of fantasy and pornography, or actual behavior. In addition, sexual expression is capable of a diversity of variations. People are variously “turned on” by different body parts, nudity or semi-nudity, smells, exotic clothing, instruments and “toys”, aggression or gentleness, sounds, sexually explicit words, and a variety of other things.

Sex can become mixed with violence, harming another, insults, and abuse. Sex can find preference for a certain age group exclusively, certain ethnic people or people of color, certain personality types of people, and people of the same or opposite gender. And though sex is not a biological necessity like hunger, the need for air or water, it seems to be generally important for a person’s sense of fulfillment and completion, for sex involves intimacy, bonding, connectedness, love, procreation, affection, pleasure, playfulness and humor, and contributes to an adequate self-image and self-esteem.

Given the powerful force it is, and the difficulty with control which sex is for many people, sexual expression is a source of distress, discouragement, failure, guilt and shame for many. This is particularly true for Christians who’s moral and religious convictions stand in opposition to homosexuality. This writing therefore, is intended primarily for people who consider themselves biblically faithful Christians and who experience same-sex attraction.

This last statement defines the boundaries and focus of this writing. I am addressing SSA people who accept the Bible’s prohibition of homosexuality. While what is discussed might have application to agnostics, atheists, non-Christians and people of other faiths, I am addressing how specifically, committed SSA Christians work out these two often conflicting forces in their lives; same-sex attraction and biblical faith.

Put another way, the general goal of this paper is to speak to the issue or question, “How should a committed Christian who is SSA decide what to do; what is the morally right thing, and psychologically healthy thing to do; what is most pleasing to God?”

This writing began from an inspired reading of a passage from the Book of Romans found in the Bible. These are the words of **Romans 12:1-2**

- (1) **“I encourage you and even beg you my Christian brothers and sisters, because of the many mercies which God has shown you and continues to show you, to offer Him your body, soul and spirit as a “living” sacrifice. Not the dead sacrifices of animals any more! Offer your whole self, consecrated to Him. This**

is the only sacrifice which is holy and pleasing to God. This is also the most meaningful and logical worship of one who is truly alive in Christ.

- (2) To do this, you must not be conformed without to the world's standards and delusions. They are either sinful or at least worthless. Instead, let God transform you from within, beginning with your mind, giving you a new, faith-filled way of thinking. Then you will understand what truly pleases God and fulfills His will for you personally."

I have rendered it in my own words. This passage is also given in the footnote by J B Phillips, a standard paraphrased version.¹

This passage may be considered an important biblical statement which indicates God's expectations of the Christian person who is dealing with the issue of SSA; but only so, if you are a biblically faithful Christian, a Christian who regards the Bible as important, reliable, and the inspired authoritative Word from God. If you view the Bible this way, then you are most likely a Christian who is more than Christian in name only. If the Bible is genuinely seen by you as inspired and authoritative because it comes from God to men, then what the Bible says is not only respected but also seen as prescriptive; imposing an obligation of obedience and submission to its commands and instruction. You believe that, "**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work**" (2 Timothy 3:16). And you also believe that, "**Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.**" (Luke 11:28). "**But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him.**" (1 John 2:5).

Viewing the Bible in this way also highly presupposes that at some point in time, you became a spiritually awakened, revived or renewed Christian. That is, a Christian who placed his or her faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, and experienced the indwelling presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit in your life. You have come to know God as your Father, and yourself as His loved child. See the footnote, "*Signs of a Spiritually Awakened Christian*"²

If on the other hand, you are not the kind of Christian who has made Christ your personal Savior, or realizes yourself as a child of God your Father, or recognizes the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in your life, then the Bible will most likely not be the authoritative Word of God to which you are willing to submit in obedience in order to please God your Father.

But if all the above is true for you, than you will be receptive to this writing based on the passage found in **Romans 12:1-2**.

What does this passage teach?

Well first, it's clear that there is no reference to homosexuality or sexuality at all in this passage. So why use it at all to speak about God's expectations concerning SSA? Because, as we said above, "**All Scripture ... is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...**" All Scripture must be viewed cumulatively and unitively. The Bible is a book with a remarkably consistent philosophy, theology and moral worldview from Genesis through Revelation.

First then, in this passage, Paul reminds us that there are "**many mercies which God has shown you and continues to show you.**" If this is personally true for you; if you can count the many mercies and blessings which God your Father is always sending your way, then

Paul feels you ought to give God something back; not in the spirit of obligation or “one favor deserves another”, but in genuine love and gratefulness. We respond in generous giving and love when we have been loved so much and so unconditionally. **“We love him, because he first loved us”** (1 John 4:19).

But what can we give our Father in return? There surely is nothing God needs from us. Is there anything He wants from us? Only one thing; Everything! He wants back the one thing that He gave us, our lives. He wants us to give Him our lives, our body, soul and spirit. That’s the only gift that is worthy of God’s goodness to us. This is the only worthy “sacrifice” we can make. **“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms”**. (1 Peter 4:10)

The word “sacrifice” means *“an act of offering to God something precious, the destruction or surrender of something to God.”* In the past this sacrifice was often the offering of a once living, now killed and dead animal of value and purity. But God does not want dead offerings from us. In the progressive and evolving development of a people of faith which God chose, He established a number of symbols and “types” which would culminate in the life of His Son Jesus Christ. One such type was the slain lamb, which represented the blood sacrifice made by Jesus Christ on the cross.

But Christ having made a blood sacrifice for sin once and forever, God now seeks a “living” offering or sacrifice. He wants our dedicated, consecrated living; our lives, the gift of ourselves. This is the kind of sacrifice which is holy, pleasing and true worship to God (verse 1). He desires that we offer Him a morally honorable, biblically faithful life.

Options for the Biblically Faithful SSA Christian

When homosexuality develops in a biblically faithful Christian’s life, it is very powerful; it demands a vast amount of attention and demands some form of expression. It is there, it is real, and it is powerful! It will exert such a powerful force upon the person’s whole psycho-social life adjustment that it will eventually channel him into one of three **LIFE-CHOICES**. It will force him to deal with his SSA as a major life accommodation in one of three ways. What are these three ways? He will eventually be directed into:

1. The **GAY LIFE-CHOICE**, or, (living **FOR** homosexuality) as a gay or lesbian person.
2. The **CONFLICTED LIFE-CHOICE** (living **AGAINST** homosexuality) in which he is continuously unresolved, unsettled, at war with himself, sexually acting out, troubled, conflicted and without peace. Or,
3. **The RESOLVED LIFE-CHOICE** (living **WITH** homosexuality). This is the state in which a biblically faithful Christian responds to the grace of God to resolve and manage SSA by doing the kind of productive pro-active work which leads to resolution and sexual self-management.

Those are the three adaptations he can make. And the fact is that so many SSA Christians are, by default, living the Conflicted Life-Choice. They are living a battle against homosexuality, which is to say, **against** themselves, because SSA is an insistent reality. They are not at peace with self, they are divided, discouraged, unhappy, guilt-ridden and continuously failing. Christians spend many years slipping and falling, tormented and discouraged. If they cannot live as a gay person, and they should not live as a conflicted person, then the only realistic option is to seek to Resolve and Manage their SSA issues.

What does this **Resolved life-choice** look like?

1. He is settling the underlying emotional, psychological, social issues related to the development of homosexuality. For homosexuality is a developmental, maturational “disorientation” from heterosexuality.
2. He is becoming increasingly more self-integrated, self-accepting, at peace with himself and emotionally mature.
3. He is becoming progressively free from obsessive SSA interests, pursuits or behavior. Homosexuality is fading into the background of his life.
4. He is growing as a person and as a Christian.
5. He is forming healthy, wholesome same-gender and other gender relationships; and even perhaps moving on to heterosexual marriage or marital stability and satisfying functioning as a heterosexual person.

All of this takes place even though there may be some vestiges of same-sex attraction and temptation in his life. He is not seeking to necessarily eliminate or “cure” or eradicate his problem with homosexuality. That’s the “Cure mentality”, and it’s unrealistic. Rather he must adopt a realistic “Resolution Mentality”. That is, he is learning a way of working with himself which is psychologically healthy; not denying, repressing, suppressing or fighting with the SSA he experiences. Resolution and management are the key processes involved.

Deep within the biblically faithful SSA Christian there will be the belief, and the counsel of the Holy Spirit, that this is God's heart-desire for him. God's love-desire for him is that he seek the **Resolved Life-Choice**. This does not mean that God necessarily insists on him living as a heterosexual person. Rather, God wants him to be able to live with SSA in a healthy, mature way, either as a celibate or married person. A life that is morally wholesome and pleasing to God. God is much more pleased with the Christian who makes this his life-choice –even if he fails from time to time – rather than choosing a life-choice of habitual homosexual identity and sin.

This conviction arises from at least 10 biblical references to homosexuality in the Bible. And is especially centered on **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**.

9 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.

Can this be achieved?

Yes! This is where verse 2 of Romans 12:1-2 applies. Verse one told us the “What” which ought to be our response to the many mercies and blessings of God. Verse two speaks of the “how” to do it. It says,

“To do this, you must not be conformed without to the world’s standards and delusions. They are either sinful or at least worthless. Instead, let God transform you from within, beginning with your mind, giving you a new, faith-filled way of thinking. Then you will understand what truly pleases God and fulfills His will for you personally.” (Romans 12:2)

Notice the **contrasts** and **consequences** found in this verse!

1. “**To do this**” refers to choosing and pursuing the **Resolved Life-Choice**.
2. To do this, “**you must *not be conformed without to the world’s standards and delusions. They are either sinful or at least worthless.***” The first requirement is to free yourself from conformity to the world’s standards and delusions, especially about homosexuality. The Christian must see clearly with the light of faith, that the world’s standards about homosexuality are delusions, sinful, and ultimately spiritually destructive. “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” (Galatians 6:7). He must recognize this and then separate himself from it, in his thinking, his behavior and in his associations. And this is not going to be easy for him.
3. Paul contrasts that negative requirement with a positive requirement. He says, “**let God *transform you from within, beginning with your mind, giving you a new, faith-filled way of thinking.***” The SSA Christian seeking Resolution must allow God to transform his mind. All change begins with the mind, with new thinking. New thinking in turn effects emotions, attitudes, desires and behavior. God wants you to have a godly, biblically faithful mind. A mind which is filled with the correct thinking given by the Holy Spirit, the Counselor and Teacher.

How does one develop this kind of thinking? *By continuous, faithful prayer, Bible study and meditations, by attending a good biblically faithful church, where there is biblical preaching, fellowship, support and discipline. Also, through good Christian reading, a support group, accountability, Christian counseling, and by listening to the Voice of the Holy Spirit.*

4. What consequence or results can you expect from doing these things? You can expect to enter into that Resolved Life-Choice. You will “**understand what truly pleases God and fulfills His will for you personally.**” You can expect to have a good conscience, fewer temptations and much fewer slips into sin, and a new maturity as a Christian and a person.

¹ . **Romans 12:1-2** - With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I (Paul) beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.

² 1. You will pray sincerely and eagerly from the heart. This will be done honestly, willingly, and spontaneously. 2. You will frequently want to praise God and thank Him for His many blessings in your life. 3. You will be interested in searching and understanding the Bible because you now realize that it is God's Word. You will find that He speaks to you personally from His written Word. 4. You will want to share your faith with others and will want to be with others who share your faith. 5. Your attitudes, values, and desires will increasingly be more godly even though you will continue to struggle with sexual sin. 6. You will seek after holiness and goodness and will begin to dislike sin in all its forms. Sexual sins will never again be engaged in without some conflict and remorse. 7. You will also begin to feel more self-accepting and properly self-loving. You will also be more tolerant, kind, and loving toward others, but also more eager to see others change their sinful habits. 8. You will sense the Holy Spirit dwelling and acting more powerfully in your heart and life. 9. You will begin to want to know God more intimately and will lovingly and meaningfully begin to call Him Father or Jesus. 10. You will want to serve God in some way. 11. You will be more aware of sin and Satan in the world and seek to discern good from evil more effectively. 12. You will experience more power; power over sin and Satan.

