

6. 1 Cor 6.9 & 1 Tim 1.9-10 (continued)

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 (1 Cor 6.9); the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine (1 Tim 1.9-10).

I. How can we state the relevance of these texts to those who practice same-sex sin
Same-sex sins are included in the category of the sexually immoral.

II. What can be said about a narrow meaning for “men who practice homosexuality”?

A. Effeminate male

In Paul’s day, it was common for some men to even dress like women as part of same-sex sex. However, its connotation is sufficiently broad and inclusive of any who function to any extent in the woman’s role sexually. It may simply be a reference to one of the partners, the one that replaces the female, and it is a variation of homosexual sin with accent on the replacement role.

B. Male sex

Literally: “male bed.” Bed is the marriage bed; thus, marital intimacy or its defilement. The context here indicates sin and it is sin as defilement of the marriage bed, but what is the sin precisely? The options are-male who has sex as a prostitute, fornicator, or a male who has sex with a male, a homosexual.

1. Male prostitute.

On this reading, consenting adult homosexual relationships, especially, those that are not excessive (multiple partners) and that are not oppressive (with minors; gang rape; sexual abuse of slaves) are not in view and not condemned by Paul. Male prostitution could be, but is not necessarily, homosexual.

Basis for this reading: the word in question is a compound, male-bed, or male bedder because bed is circumlocution for sexual intimacy so the second part has a verbal function; writers like Boswell (an extremely influential pro-gay exegete) take the first part (male) as the subject, the one who does the bedding; thus a man who commits sexual immorality with men or women; thus simply a male prostitute (Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 1980, 343-344).

2. Homosexual

a. The grammatical construction indicates homosexual

There is no evidence from biblical or extra-biblical sources for this kind of grammatical construction in which the first part of the compound is the subject of the verbal idea of the second part. Extant examples have the first part as object of the verbal idea (Wright, *Homosexuals or Prostitutes? The Meaning of Ἀρσενικοῖται* [1 Cor 6.9, 1 Tim 1.10], *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 [1984], 130-132). Thus, for this compound in Paul’s letters a male (the noun is masculine) beds a male. The sin is stated generally; thus, all forms of male same-sex sex are in view and are included in the class of acts that are sexually immoral.

b. The obvious parallel with Leviticus indicates homosexual

From 1 Cor 5, we already noted how Paul roots his thinking about sexual sin in Leviticus 18 (specifically regarding incest). Now, it is easy to see the roots of Lev 18.22 in the LXX, the OT Greek: You shall not bed with (the Hebrew has lay with) a man as a man beds sexually with a

wife. The major difference between Lev 18.22 and Paul is the shift from a command to the person who disobeys the command. If you speak of a man who does what Leviticus forbids, then he is a man (Lev 20.13, cf. the Hebrew with the masculine form in 1 Cor) who beds-lies in bed sexually-with a man as a man lies in bed sexually with his wife. This is a command to a man that prohibits male same-sex sex. It applies to a woman *mutatis mutandis* because all the commands of Lev 18 prohibit violations of marital intimacy (which is violated by incest, adultery, same-sex sex, and so forth).

Therefore, Paul's list in 1 Cor 6.9 speaks generally to both participants in male homosexuality and can be translated: "men who assume the female role in sex, men who have sex with them" (Wright, *VC*, quoting Furnish fn. 1, 146).

Next: How should we apply 1 Cor and 1 Tim?