

****Patrick Andrist: The Demand for Celibacy Among Same-Sex Oriented Individuals in Light of Pauline Theology****

****Queergedacht – Chapter 14****

****René Gehring****

In Section 14, the book **Queergedacht** addresses an important foundational chapter of biblical marriage and sexual ethics: 1 Corinthians 7. It highlights the reasons for the decision to remain celibate. In addition to the danger of Christian persecution, which could severely affect a couple or even a family with children, it can also be a conscious decision for a more comprehensive, God-devoted life. One is then not divided in heart by the demands of married life. It is accurately presented that Paul primarily describes celibacy as a spiritual gift that is not given to every Christian and that cannot be arbitrarily imposed on anyone. It is certainly also true that Paul speaks in verse 9 of erotic desire, which is not easily controlled—and that, as Paul writes, “it is better to marry than to burn with desire.”

However, in the author's argument, this is transferred to homosexual desire. He uses this to justify the necessity of a same-sex, monogamous marriage for those who feel homosexual. Abstinence is termed an unrealistic option. A permanent suppression of the deep longing for sexual love would overwhelm many individuals. Furthermore, it is stated that Paul does not address the topic of same-sex marriage at all—and therefore no prohibition can be derived from it.

This is not correct. Elsewhere, Paul speaks very openly about homosexual relationships, even if he does not refer to them as “marriage.” That would have been impossible, as marriage is biblically defined as a relationship between the two God-created genders, male and female. Apart from that, the Bible does not provide for any other gender or a marriage between same-sex partners.

It is therefore correct that Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7, is certainly not thinking of same-sex marriage. The prohibition of any homosexual activity in Leviticus 18 and 20 was too clear. This prohibition is entirely independent of sexual orientation or relationship status. A homosexual Christian marriage was therefore unthinkable for Paul or any other Christian.

This means that we cannot apply the principles that Paul lays out in his treatment of the subject of sexuality and marriage in 1 Corinthians 7 to homosexual relationships. His entire argument deals with the possibilities and challenges of heterosexual individuals and partnerships. His advice to marry rather than “burn” (in verse 9) is meant for heterosexual individuals and is not transferable to homosexual relationships.

Biblically, even a legitimate heterosexual marriage cannot be justified solely by the overpowering nature of sexual desire. In 1 Thessalonians 4:5, the same author, Paul, informs us that we must NOT marry driven by desire, as the Gentiles do. As Christians, we should be guided by higher motives.

This leads to the conclusion that the explanation in 1 Corinthians 7 should not suggest that sexual desire justifies a relationship. In verses 5 and 9, it is clear that Paul endorses marriage as the God-ordained framework for sexual activities—not the motive that drives many individuals, which he refers to as the weakness of “lack of self-control.” In fact, he points out that self-control or abstinence is one of the greatest Christian virtues (see Galatians 5:23). This virtue is also required of heterosexual individuals regarding all extramarital sexual activities. And if a heterosexual Christian does not find a suitable partner throughout his life or loses his partner, the principle of abstinence also applies to him. An innate sexual drive alone does not justify a sexual relationship if it does not align with the revealed will of God.

This is also evident in Paul's condemnation of close associations with non-Christians in 2 Corinthians 6:14—the closest and most personal connection being marriage. Paul adopts the Old Testament principle that prohibits marriages with unbelievers, as seen in Deuteronomy 7:3. Moreover, 1 Corinthians 5:1 shows that Paul feels committed to the Old Testament sexual morality when he condemns a relationship with a woman that a father had previously.

In both cases, he expresses his fidelity to the enduring marriage and sexual ethics that God revealed to His people in the Old Testament. None of the apostles would have had the right to allow anything that God had previously forbidden so clearly.

It is also claimed that Paul did not consider homosexual marriages because he was shaped by the Roman culture of his time and could not have been aware of today's scientific insights regarding possible homosexual orientation. This perspective overlooks that we are not only dealing with the human Paul, who wrote to the best of his knowledge, but with the inspired Word of an all-knowing God. What light does this understanding shed on the reliability of the Bible and the character of God? Where else might the Bible be wrong because its writers did not know enough? Must we not assume that God directed the process of inspiration so that the apostles and prophets wrote only what God Himself wanted to convey to us? Then we are not dealing with a fallible, uninformed human writer but with the all-knowing God.

Jesus, the Creator of humanity, who knows all our various weaknesses and sinful inclinations, addresses the subject of marriage and sexuality much more realistically. In Matthew 19:12, He makes it clear that not everyone is made for marriage. He acknowledges that this can relate to both prenatal and postnatal influences. For Him, it makes no difference whether something is innate or acquired later in life.

If a biblically legitimate marriage is not an option due to personal life situations or orientations, it is no less valuable a life if it is lived sincerely and in accordance with the Word of God. The biblical conditions placed on a marriage—and thus on a legitimate sexual relationship—cannot orient themselves to the individual with all his brokenness. Rather, the individual must orient himself to the unchanging standard of the Word of God.

Therefore, it is not true that the church should rejoice with Jesus and Paul over a homosexual relationship. Rather, the church has the task of upholding the biblically clearly formulated framework of a God-pleasing marriage between a man and a woman.
