

Are we going to go over every passage in The Bible?

No! After presenting Malcolm Goodwin's excellent Bible Study on Romans I am going to content myself with a broad overview. There are several other texts that have been used against us, but in fact are variations on the same themes.

Never settle for one translation when reading the bible, always check and recheck, and if you can, get to look at an interlinear bible with the original Greek and Hebrew words. Then look those words up individually if in doubt and see what they have been used to mean elsewhere. This is serious stuff! We cannot take anything for granted as so much has been deliberately or mistakenly distorted. I will, in closing, just give you an example of translator's distortion.

Take 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

The words to note are *malakoi*; (*malakoi*) and *arsenokoitai* (*arsenokoitai*). Both words are very obscure, occur virtually nowhere else and may well have been colloquial expressions now long lost to us. *Malakoi* means literally 'soft' and may have referred to someone unmanly (do not jump to assume you know what this means – Greek philosophers believed it was 'unmanly' to fall in love with a woman; many held same sex relations to be more 'manly') or to any number of things. *Arsenokoitai*, like *Malakoi* has spawned volumes of speculation, and literally comes across as approximately 'man-bedder' but could have referred to a variety of things from pimps to temple prostitutes to hustlers to I know not what. There were certainly several good Greek words for what approximates to 'male homosexual' in our language, so presumably if Paul had intended to talk of them he could have used these words. The meaning is at best obscure, and not something you would want to base a two millennia long campaign of violence, murder and discrimination upon! Now keep in mind that the word homosexual was a Victorian invention – with no direct parallel in any language until then and read the following translations of this passage..

American Standard Version: *unrighteous, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with men, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers or extortioners.*

Amplified Bible: *unrighteous and wrongdoers; impure and immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuality, cheats (swindlers and thieves), greedy graspers, drunkards, revilers and slanderers, extortioners and robbers*

The Answer: *people who do wrong; sin sexually, worship idols, take part in adultery, male prostitutes, men who have sexual relations with other men, steal, greedy, get drunk, lie about others, rob*

The Authentic New Testament: *evil-doers; immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, userers, drunkards, foul-mouthed, extortioners*

Christian Standard Bible: sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, greedy people, drunkards, revilers, or swindlers

The Jerusalem Bible: people who do wrong; people of immoral lives, idolaters, adulterers, catamites, sodomites, thieves, usurers, drunkards, slanderers, swindlers

King James: unrighteous; fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners

Living Bible: going to outside judges, immoral, idol worshipers, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanderers, robbers

The Living New Testament: those doing such things, live immoral lives, idol worshipers, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, greedy people, drunkards, slanderers, robbers

Modern Language: unrighteous; profligates, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, avaricious, drunkards, slanderers, robbers

James Moffatt: wicked; immoral, idolaters, adulterers, catamites, sodomites, thieves, lustful, drunken, abusive, robbers

New American: unjust; fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, boy prostitutes, practicing homosexuals, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, slanderers, robbers

New American Standard: unrighteous; fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers or swindlers.

New Century Version: people who do wrong, sin sexually, worship idols, take part in adultery, men who have sexual relations with other men, steal, selfish, get drunk, lie about others, cheat

New International: wicked; sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexual offenders, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanderers, swindlers

New Living Translation: those who do wrong; those who indulge in sexual sin, idol worshipers, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, drunkards, abusers, swindlers

New Revised Standard Version: wrongdoers; fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, greedy drunkards, revilers, robbers

New Testament and Psalms: (3) wrongdoers; sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, thieves, greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers

New World: unrighteous; fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, men kept for unnatural purposes, men who lie with men, thieves, greedy persons, drunkards, revilers or extortioners.

The Promise: evil people; immoral, worships idols, unfaithful in marriage, pervert or behaves like a homosexual...thief, greedy person, drunkards, anyone who curses and cheats others.

Revised English Bible: wrongdoers; fornicator, idolater, adulterer, sexual pervert, thief, extortioner, drunkard, slanderer, swindler.

Revised Standard: unrighteous; immoral, idolaters, adulterers, sexual perverts, thieves, greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers

Rheims New Testament: unjust; fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, liars with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, railers, extortioners

The New Testament: lechers, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, pederasts, thieves, covetous, drunken, abusive, rapacious (Translated by Richmond Lattimore)

Today's English Version: wicked, immoral, worship idols, adulterers, homosexual perverts, steal, greedy, drunkards. slanders, thieves

The United Gospels New Testament: unrighteous; fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners

Now there are a couple there that approximate to the Greek, but most just jump right in with a judgement of certainty. Always look closely at your Bible – those wise men who translated it did not always do so with prayerful disinterest!

The lesson is that there is a clear lesson. Every time the people of God have set limits on God's love, God has swept away those limits – every time we have said 'no!' God has said 'yes!' This is not a dispensation for a life that points away from God; it is rather a call for ever more and **more** lives that point **toward** God! It is not a call for hollow self interest and bankrupt patterns of behaviour – straight people as well as gay people are prey to those. It is a call to sing God's good news with a louder voice to more people than we ever thought possible. Once it was just the men in the Jewish hierarchy who thought themselves good with God, then the men in the wider Jewish nation, then the gentiles as well, then all women and racial groups that had been excluded. Now we are able to rise above knee jerk ignorance and lack of compassion and move toward a church that celebrates LGBT people. We will have developed a more mature conversation with that extraordinary repository of divine revelation that we call the Bible. We will have stopped twisting it into a weapon and will have turned it into a lens the better to see God with.