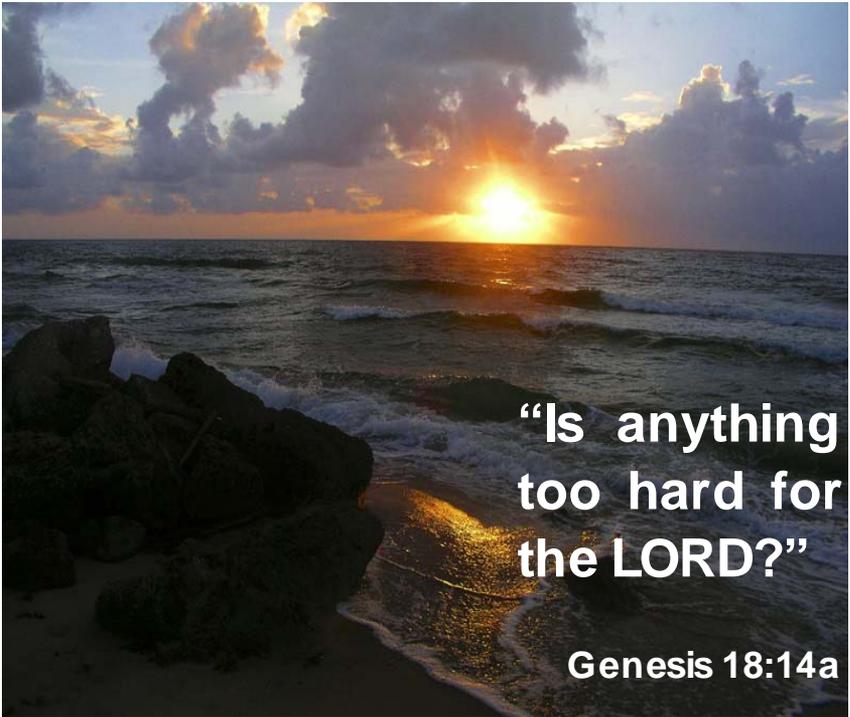




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## Sowing the Word

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“Is anything  
too hard for  
the LORD?”

Genesis 18:14a

**Genesis 18-20**  
**February 25th, 2009**

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So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading.

(Nehemiah 8:8)

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**Helpful Study Resource:**

*Explore the Book* by J. Sidlow Baxter

**Commentary:**

The commentary used with permission throughout  
this booklet is:

**With the Word Bible Commentary**

**by Warren W. Wiersbe.**

ISBN 0-8407-9108-9

# Outline

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# Notes for Booklet

## Chapter 18 Highlights and Helps by Pastor Jim

### Angel's Unaware

God lets us know in Hebrews that Abraham did not initially know that it was the Lord and His angels that he was entertaining on this day recorded in chapter 18.

*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. (Hebrews 13:2)*

It is obvious that at some point, Abraham realized these visitors were something more, that it was God. Yet, the point is, it was his hospitality that opened up the door for this. God calls us to be hospitable in this way. Literally, the word hospitality means to show love or kindness to strangers, something to think about.

### Being a Friend of God

*Abraham ... was called the friend of God. (James 2:23)*

The question for you and I, is what does that mean? What does it mean that Abraham was God's friend? A friend is someone you can talk to, that you can be real with and pour out your heart to. Now, God calls us to have Him as our friend. We are to pour out our hearts and cares to Him, to pray always and more. God should be our best friend. Yet, this relationship that Abraham has with God is more. It is not that God is Abraham's friend, but that Abraham is God's friend. What does that mean? It means that God shares His heart, concerns and thoughts with Abraham. That is exactly what we see here in Genesis 18. This is God sharing with Abraham what is on His heart...so that Abraham can join Him in concern and prayer. May God invite you into exactly such a relationship – where He shares His heart with you.

### Will not the Judge of the earth do right

This is Abraham's question and wrestling in God's presence. God tells him of the sin and wickedness in Sodom. God informs Abraham that He has come down to deal with this. Abraham's concern is obviously for Lot, but for more – for really understanding God's character and justice. Abraham rightly understands that when God judges, He always makes a distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous. It was true

in the flood, it was true in Sodom and it will be true in the coming Great Tribulation.

## Chapter 19 Highlights and Helps by Pastor Jim

### Homosexuality

This is a serious issue and as such, I wrote an article and included a couple more later on for you in this booklet.

### Lot a “Christian”

To use the NT term...is Lot a Christian? The answer is yes. Yet honestly, you would be hard pressed to see that in the OT account of Lot's life. Yet God tells us in the NT this about Lot:

*God... delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, (2 Peter 2:7-9)*

So Lot was a “Christian”...but a very worldly and ineffective one. Lot was saved and that is it. He had union with God, but not communion.

### Consider Lot's influence

- Picture of a carnal believer...
- Through his life, not one person in Sodom is effected for righteousness
- His own sons-in-law don't believe his warnings. His life has no credibility to them.
- Lost his wife – becomes a pillar of salt
- Loses two of his daughters in Sodom
- Brings two out...but they bring Sodom with them
- No other impact...no fruit, loses everything...horrible picture

### Contrast Abraham and Lot

Perhaps to me, one of the most interesting and yet sad pictures is to consider the huge contrasts that exist between the lives of Abraham and Lot.

#### Abraham

God visited Abraham  
Abraham hastened  
Message of joy

#### Lot

Angels visited Lot  
Lot lingered  
Message of Judgment

Visited in Daytime	Visited at Nighttime
Met at Tent Door	Met in City Gate
Abraham believed	Lot feared - no trust
Abraham's house obeyed God	Lot's family laughed at God
Abraham prayed	Lot schemed
Abraham saw judgment	Lot was in the judgment
- lost nothing	- lost everything
Abraham brought	Lot brought the world trouble
the world blessing	
Abraham lived to ripe old age	Lot died in darkness

The truth is that Abraham had a greater impact for good on Sodom, living outside it and praying for Sodom that Lot did living in Sodom. May the Lord save us from living the foolish life of a Lot.

## Chapter 20 Highlights and Helps by Pastor Jim

### Old Mistakes

In Genesis 12, Sarai is 65 years old when Abram goes to Egypt. In Genesis 20, she's 90, and still gorgeous. Sarai is old enough to be on social security, and can still win a beauty pageant. On both occasions though, Abram doesn't want to get lose his life for the sake of his wife so he lies – he calls her his sister to save his skin. It is a horribly sad picture of a lack of Godliness and even manliness. Yet Abram is corrected in chapter 12. The problem is that he doesn't learn from this mistake.

Here in chapter 20—it is 25 years after Abraham's folly in Egypt. During this time Abram grows in his faith, and knowledge of God –but apparently he never took the time to restructure his thinking toward his wife and his fears. Thus, when thrown into the same situation he responds in the exact same way.

This is what happens to believers. We enter a relationship with God, and grow spiritually - then a situation pops up that pressures us for a response, and since we've never retrained our minds, we revert back to the way we use to cope. We fall into the former trap because we've never transformed our thinking to see the circumstances from God's perspective, and tailor a response pleasing to Him.

Now here's the scary truth for parents – the apple never falls far from the tree. Fast forward to Genesis 26, and you find Abraham's son, Isaac, repeating the same blunder with his wife. Among the Philistines, he fears

for his life, so he tells them Rebekah is his sister. He married a pretty girl like his daddy, but he treats her in the same selfish way. Parents... your kids are learning from your actions.

What are the areas of your life where you still tend to act and react according to past habits and attitudes, instead of what you know to be God's will. Write down the verses that correct that thinking. Review them often. Restructure your thought life according to God's Word! Romans 12:1-2!

### **What about the Promise**

One of the sad things about this chapter, is that it is on the heels of Abraham and Sarah's talk with God in chapter 18. God told them that it would be 9 months to a year later that they would have a son. So this chapter fits in this time, probably pretty early on in it. (it would have been odd for Abimelech to take Sarah if she was obviously pregnant.) One wonders what Abraham was thinking...how easily he almost threw away the promises of God. Yet, God in His faithfulness does not let this happen.

### **When the world rebukes**

Perhaps one of the saddest pictures is when the world rebukes a child of God for their unrighteousness. Abimelech rebukes Abraham...who is a child of God, for being unrighteous. Yikes. It is a low and sad place, a humbling place when God allows the world to be the one that uncovers and exposes our sin.

# The Sin of Homosexuality

by Pastor Jim

As we get to this chapter in Genesis—it highlights a very current issue in the church and in our world—homosexuality.

In seeking to understand this—I have included a couple articles at the end of the booklet.

- The first article reviews for you what the Bible says about Homosexuality—countering some of the arguments that are being put forth and showing this from a Biblical stand point.
- The second article is one that really challenges us a little on how we deal with those that struggle with this issue.

I leave those for you to pursue. As I write a couple quick thoughts out here—I am going to make an assumption that you agree with me, or better said, you agree with what the Bible says about homosexuality—that it is a sin. The Bible is very clear about that—and I will leave the second article that follows this to walk you through that, if you are struggling.

What I want to do with you, for just a moment—is to explore just a tiny bit about what the Bible says about sin.

## Common Temptation

Consider what God tells us about the temptation:

*“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”*

*(1 Corinthians 10:13)*

There is such hope and reassurance given to us in this verse. We can overcome every temptation that comes our way—it is a promise! That promise is not based in us, but in God and His faithfulness! Never will a temptation be something we cannot handle! In Christ we can overcome!

Having said that, I also want you to notice something else. God says that whatever temptation we face—is “common to man”. In other words, we all are facing the same temptations. I want you to think about that, how is this statement is true?

Some could look at this statement by God and think that it is not true. For example, take this sin we are reading about in Genesis 19—homosexuality. Some will say, well that cannot be true—that we all face the same temptations, because I don't struggle with homosexuality. Or someone who does struggle with homosexuality is going to say it is not true, because others don't struggle with what they struggle with.

Or lets even go a little further with this. Consider what the Bible tells us about temptation and Jesus:

*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)*

Jesus was tempted in **every point** that we are tempted in! Does this mean that Jesus faced each and every exact temptation we face? Does this mean, as we look at Genesis 19 that even homosexuality put temptation before Him?

Don't lose me yet...I promise, I am heading somewhere with this, and I pray it is helpful.

I know this is a basic thought—but I want you to consider this—that at their roots, we all struggle with the same things. That at the root—we are all struggling with the same temptations.

God describes what is in the world that pulls at all of us this way:

*For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. (1 John 2:16)*

Lust of flesh—is bodily desires gone amuck. What God gave to enjoy, is now served and in deviate ways. The main area this shows up in is the sexual drive God gave us. But it also includes desires for food, or even sleep—producing gluttony and laziness.

Lust of the eyes—is the desire for other things—covetousness, the desire for money, for riches. 1 Timothy 6:10 tells us this root, the love of money —is a root of massive evil.

Pride of life—is self exaltation, and putting ourselves above others and above God. It is to life for self.

So you could be simple about this and say that everyone is tempted by lust, money and pride. Every temptation is based in one of those roots,

one of those common denominators. The expressions of sin are different and varied...but the roots are the same - Lust, Money and Pride!

Interestingly—if you go back to the first temptation with Eve—you see all three issues coming into play. If you then advance to Jesus temptation in Matt 4—you see Him pelted with three temptations—each one rooted in one of these three things. Temptation in its origin with Eve to the perfect example with Jesus—all temptation can be summed up with those three areas.

So—in application—that does not mean that Jesus faced each and every temptation exactly as we do? No, that is not even possible, for many of our temptations are consequences of previous sins—which He has none. But—in its root, in its essence—Jesus faced each of these three roots of sin and perfectly overcame. He was tempted in all areas yet never sinned—as it says in Hebrews.

What is the point in all this....that is a good question.

On one hand, we have a danger today of categorizing some sins as especially bad, things like homosexuality. But Biblically, we are challenged with a different mindset.

Those who don't struggle with homosexuality are called to see that those who struggle with this are simply struggling with lust. In fact, it is the same root of lust—that has a different expression in their own life. 1 Corinthians 10:13 applies, as we are all struggling with the same things—temptation. Applied out, this gives these both grace and understanding. Further, even though someone does not struggle with homosexuality, they can speak with authority and understanding to someone who does—because they see the common root of lust. We all struggle with common temptations!

Those who do struggle with homosexuality are called to understand that their struggles are not extraordinary. There is this thing happening in our world and it is a satanic trap! These are wanting to see their sin as “who they are” instead of what they struggle with. Those who are in this place, want to say “I am a homosexual” - but Biblically—that is not true. They struggle with sin, the sin of lust. Yes it may be expressed differently than what others are struggling with—but those who struggle with this are not a “special case” or deserving special recognition for their struggles. It is sin, out and out. To deny the homosexual pull is simply to deny sin—just like every Christian has to do.

### But isn't homosexuality special in its judgment?

Someone will say but Pastor Jim, doesn't it say that homosexuality is a special thing, in that those who practice this sin are not heaven bound?

For example it says in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither ... homosexuals, nor sodomites ...will inherit the kingdom of God.*

This is true, but again, it is not a special case...for the whole verse reads like this:

*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)*

Those who live out their lusts—in fornication, adultery, homosexuality, etc—are not saved—because there are living a lifestyle given over to sin. So it is true that homosexuality is sin, and living in that sin (not being rescued from it) proves one is not saved. But so does living in fornication and adultery—other forms of the same root of lust.

### So why the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah?

As you look at the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, as it is described all the way through the Bible, you see them given over to sin—in all of its areas!

Lust was not just a problem, but a lifestyle and the whole community was given over to it. The homosexuality practiced was a mark of the community being given over to sin.

But that was not the only sin they were given over to. God tells us more in Ezekiel 16:49-50

*Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit. (Ezekiel 16:49-50)*

Notice God here tells us that the other two roots of sin—self seeking pursuit and pride were also rampant there.

So Sodom and Gomorrah become a picture and an illustration of a city

given over to sin...in all three of its ugly manifestations—and therefore became an example of God's judgment.

This becomes helpful and we pray and watch what is taking place in our community and world...for all three of these areas of sin are making major advances and becoming more and more the rule instead of the exception.

But...take heart Christian—if I can quote it one more time:

*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)*

Christian—your temptations are the same thing that everyone is facing. It may have a different expression—but the roots are the same. You are no exception to the rule.

Christian—you can overcome—God promised. He is faithful and He will never let you have a temptation you cannot overcome. He promises a way out. Look for it—take it—and know that you can!

## **Is there any evidence for the Biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction by fire and brimstone ?**

Author: Bryant Wood of Associates for Biblical Research

The ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah have been discovered southeast of the Dead Sea. The modern names are Bab edh-Dhra, thought to be Sodom, and Numeira, thought to be Gomorrah. Both places were destroyed at the same time by an enormous conflagration. The destruction debris was about three feet thick.

What brought about this awful calamity? Startling discoveries in the cemetery at Bab edh-Dhra revealed the cause. Archaeologists found that buildings used to bury the dead were burned by a fire that started on the roof.

What would cause every structure in the cemetery to be destroyed in this way? The answer to the mystery is found in the Bible. "Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah -- from the Lord out of the heavens" (Genesis 19:24). The only conceivable explanation for this

unique discovery in the annals of archaeology is that burning debris fell on the buildings from the air. But how could such a thing happen?

There is ample evidence of subterranean deposits of a petroleum-based substance called bitumen, similar to asphalt, in the region south of the Dead Sea. Such material normally contains a high percentage of sulfur. It has been postulated by geologist Frederick Clapp that pressure from an earthquake could have caused the bitumen deposits to be forced out of the earth through a fault line. As it gushed out of the earth it could have been ignited by a spark or surface fire. It would then fall to earth as a burning, fiery mass.

It was only after Clapp formulated this theory that Sodom and Gomorrah were found. It turns out that the sites are located exactly on a fault line along the eastern side of a plain south of the Dead Sea, so Clapp's theory is entirely plausible. There is some evidence for this scenario from the Bible itself. Abraham viewed the destruction from a vantage point west of the Dead Sea. The Bible records what Abraham saw: "He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace" (Genesis 19:28). Dense smoke suggests smoke from a petroleum-based fire. Smoke rising like smoke from a furnace indicates a forced draft, such as would be expected from subterranean deposits being forced out of the ground under pressure.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah became an example in the Bible of how God judges sin. "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before Me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen" (Ezekiel 16:49-50).

# What's wrong with being gay?

Homosexual behavior versus the Bible  
Author: Ann Lamont , Answers in Genesis.

The issue of homosexual behavior has had a lot of publicity of late. Homosexuals say that the slaves have been freed and women have been liberated, so gay rights are long overdue. Society does seem to be moving in that direction. Many homosexuals are "coming out" and openly declaring their homosexuality. In many parts of the western world, homosexual couples receive the same recognition as heterosexual couples with regard to social security benefits. Some church leaders are giving their blessing to homosexual relationships, homosexual church members and even homosexual ministers.

Many homosexuals' claim that...

They are made that way.

Homosexuality is of no harm to the participants or to anyone else.

If it feels right to those involved, it is nobody else's business.

Homosexual relationships and heterosexual relationships are equally valid. (Some even claim that the Bible condones homosexual relationships.)

## **Made that way?**

Since other groups who have been discriminated against (such as women, blacks and the disabled) have been given equal opportunity, homosexuals claim that they, too, should be liberated. However, as one Christian expert has said...

"Gender, race and impairment all relate to what a person is, whereas homosexuality relates to what a person does."

In contrast, homosexuals claim that scientific studies have shown that there is a biological basis for homosexuality.

Three main studies are cited by "gay rights" activists in support of their argument—Hamer's X-chromosome research, LeVay's study of the hypothalamus, and Bailey and Pillard's study of identical twins who were homosexuals.

In all three cases, the researchers had a vested interest in obtaining a certain outcome because they were homosexuals themselves. More importantly, their studies did not stand up to scientific scrutiny by other researchers. Also, "the media typically do not explain the methodological flaws in these studies, and they typically oversimplify the results". There is

no reliable evidence to date that homosexual behavior is determined by a person's genes.

To the extent that biological or social factors may contribute to a person's bent toward homosexual behavior, this does not excuse it. Some people have a strong bent towards stealing or abuse of alcohol, but they still choose to engage or not engage in this behavior—the law rightly holds them accountable.

The final report of the Baptist Union of Western Australia (BUWA) Task Force on Human Sexuality states 'that a person becomes a homosexual ultimately by choosing to be involved in same-sex activity... This is in contrast to innate characteristics such as gender and ethnicity.' The report affirms that 'the Bible is clear that sin involves choice, and it unequivocally condemns homosexual behavior as sin'.

The foundational teaching on marriage and sexual issues is found in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. When Jesus was questioned about marriage, He referred to these 2 chapters (Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12). Genesis teaches us that 'male and female He created them' (Genesis 1:27). We were created to a plan—male and female complementing each other. That is, God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve, nor Madam and Eve.

Genesis also teaches that God instituted and designed marriage between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:18-25). There are a number of reasons why He did so.

The complementary structure of the male and female anatomy is obviously designed for the normal husband-wife relationships. Clearly, design in human biology supports heterosexuality and contradicts homosexuality.

The combination of male and female enables man (and the animals) to produce and nurture offspring as commanded in Genesis 1:28—'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth'. This command is repeated

to Noah after the Flood (Genesis 8:15-17). But procreation is not the only reason God made humans as sexual beings. The BUWA report affirms 'that sexual intimacy between husband and wife is good, and is intended by God for bonding, pleasure and procreation.'

Thirdly, God gave man and woman complementary roles in order to strengthen the family unit. Woman was to be the helper that man needed (Genesis 2:18). However, the woman's role as the helpmate is certainly not an inferior one. The enterprising God-fearing woman in Proverbs 31:10-31

is an inspiring role model.

### **No harm?**

Andrew Lansdown points out that 'homosexual activity is notoriously disease-prone. In addition to diseases associated with heterosexual promiscuity, homosexual actions facilitate the transmission of anal herpes, hepatitis B, intestinal parasites, Kaposi's Sarcoma and AIDS.'<sup>1</sup> Research on the life expectancy of a group of homosexual men in Canada in the early 1990s indicated that they could expect 8-21 years less lifespan than other men.

### **Effect on others**

Secular psychologists assure us that 'children raised in lesbian and gay households are similar to children raised in heterosexual households on characteristics such as intelligence, development, moral judgments, self-concepts, social competence and gender identity'. The humanists have, however, forgotten one important ingredient.

'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it' (Proverbs 22:6).

You cannot faithfully teach God's Word to your children while living a lifestyle specifically condemned by God's Word. All Christians are sinners forgiven by God's grace, but living in a homosexual relationship constitutes habitual, unrepented sin.

### **Nobody else's business?**

Gay activists claim that homosexual activity is nobody's business other than those involved in the relationship. However, this is not true. God, our Designer and Creator, has authority over all aspects of our lives. He makes the rules, and He quite specifically forbids homosexual behavior.

'You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination' (Leviticus 18:22; see also Leviticus 20:13).

Disobedience of such a clear command indicates rejection of God's authority.

Some people argue that the Old Testament law (including Leviticus 18 and 20) was superseded with the coming of Christ. However, we should at least consider as binding those aspects of the law that are renewed in the New Testament. The teaching of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 was certainly reaffirmed in the New Testament.

## Equally valid?

Some people claim that homosexual behavior was only condemned in the Bible because it was associated with idolatry (e.g. 1 Kings 14:24). However, it is clearly condemned apart from idolatry as well (e.g. Leviticus 18:22). It is described in Scripture as an unnatural, immoral perversion.

'For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another...' (Romans 1:26-27).

The Greek word *arsenokoitai* used in 1 Timothy 1:10 literally means 'men who sleep with men'. It is the same Greek word used for 'homosexual offender' in 1 Corinthians 6:9, variously translated as 'abusers of themselves with mankind' (KJV), homosexuals (NASB) or homosexual offender (NIV).

Some people claim that the sin involved in Sodom was rejecting hospitality customs or selfishness rather than homosexual behavior. Certainly, the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah was great and their reported sin was grievous to God (Genesis 18:20). God sent angels to Sodom and...

'Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have sex with them"' (Genesis 19:4-5).

"While it is true that the Hebrew word *yadha* does not necessarily mean 'to have sex with,' nonetheless in the context of Sodom and Gomorrah, it clearly had this meaning. ...It means 'to know sexually' in this very chapter when Lot refers to his two daughters not having 'known' a man (19:8). You would not offer virgins to appease a mob if their sin was lack of hospitality, but only if their desire was sexual.

Although Ezekiel 16:49 condemns Sodom for its selfishness with regard to poverty etc., this does not contradict its condemnation for homosexual practices. "The very next verse of Ezekiel (v. 50) calls their sin an "abomination". This is the same Hebrew word used to describe homosexual sins in Leviticus 18:22."

It is also used in Scripture to describe such things like the practice of offering children to Moloch, but never such things as mere selfishness or lack of hospitality. Even in legal parlance, the word used to refer to one

aspect of homosexual practice is 'sodomy'.

Other scriptural arguments for homosexuality can similarly be easily refuted. It is clear that heterosexual marriage is the only form of marriage sanctioned in the Bible and that homosexual practice is always condemned.

### **Punishment**

The Bible not only describes homosexual behavior as detestable, but it also calls for the punishment of those involved (Leviticus 20:13). Their unrepentant attitude caused God to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24-25).

Just as homosexual conduct has been punished in the past, so it will also be punished by God in the future.

"...Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

### **Hope**

However, there is hope for the homosexual. God forgives and cleanses a person who repents and turns from their sin, including the sin of homosexual behavior (1 Corinthians 6:11). As well as forgiveness, God's grace brings with it the power to live a life that is pleasing to God (Romans 6:6-7). If repentance and reform are genuine, prior homosexual actions should not be a bar to church membership or ministry, as all Christians are reformed sinners.

'Liberal' churches espouse tolerance of homosexual behavior in the name of 'love'. They plug for the acceptance of homosexual conduct as normal, 'because they can't help it'. They are not only wrong about the latter, but they are actually not being at all loving towards homosexuals, because, contrary to the Bible, they reduce the homosexual person to the level of an animal, driven by instinct. In removing moral responsibility from the person, they dehumanize them, whereas the Bible says we are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), with the power of moral choice.

Furthermore, the gospel proclaims liberation from the bondage of sin, including homosexual sin, whereas the 'liberals' tell the homosexual that they cannot help it, and they can't help them either, so they will accept them as they are! However, many a person has been gloriously rescued from the bondage of homosexual sin (and other sin) by the power of the Holy Spirit, but only Bible-believing Christians can offer such hope.

## Conclusion

As with all moral issues, our beliefs about our origin determine our attitude. If we believe that we arose from slime by a combination of random chance events and the struggle for survival, it is understandable to say that there is no higher authority, and we can make our own rules. However, if there is a loving God who planned us and gave commands for us to follow, then we must do so. God has set forth His standards in the Bible, beginning with the foundational teaching in the book of Genesis.

## What About Gays Needs to Change?

It may not be what you think!

Author: Tim Wilkins

I am aware the question in this article's title presupposes a change of some sort is necessary. My presupposition is grounded in the authority of God's Word. Secondary to that – I am a Christian and a former homosexual.

Having now used that inadequate and puzzling term former homosexual, let me try to decipher the lingo and properly answer the question.

### Moving the Fridge

A story will help. A man glances out his home window and sees his neighbor. The neighbor has his pick-up truck backed to his side door, both the storm and main doors are propped open and a refrigerator blocks the doorway. Obviously the fridge is being moved and help is needed, so the friendly onlooker rushes to help his red-faced neighbor.

"Need a hand with that refrigerator, Fred?" asks Steven as he throws himself into the task. "Sure do! This thing weighs more than I thought!"

Fred and Steven throw their muscular arms around the appliance. With sweat rolling down their faces, they grunt and strain as the fridge moves a quarter of an inch then stops. They reposition their arms. The fridge barely sways even though both men are winded. After wrestling with the stubborn refrigerator for a full ten minutes, Steven gasps "Fred, I don't believe we're ever going to get this thing in the house." "In the house!" exclaims Fred, "I

trying to get it in the truck!"

The point is apparent—without a clear and focused understating of what direction the homosexual needs to go, he will progress no further than the refrigerator.

### **What Needs to Change?**

An illustration will help. Imagine a very thin lady seated at a dinner table. She fidgets with her food, spoons it from one side of her plate to the other, eats little if anything, then excuses herself from the table.

"How can a visibly gaunt woman eat so little or not at all?" we ask. Our observation could lead us to two premises—either she dislikes food or she is not hungry. If we accept the first premise—that she dislikes food--our sympathetic approach might include a variety of recommendations.

We inquire about the type of food she does like--maybe fast food, Mexican or Chinese. If not perhaps the immaculate look of a seven-course meal appeals to her appetite. Perchance she prefers her food prepared a certain way—broiled versus fried, rare versus well done. If none of these recommendations help, she could have sitophobia—a fear of food.

Let's now assume the second premise — that she is not hungry. If this suspicion is true she may be suffering from a malfunctioning metabolism. We make a doctor's appointment for her. The physician suspects a thyroid condition and orders blood work. And it's possible she has hypogeusia—a diminished sense of taste.

But as persistent as we've been, all approaches make little difference in this lady's eating habits, or lack thereof. She eats very little and infrequently! Our methods have been genuine, compassionate, and justifiable. We have devoted considerable time in our quest to correct the dilemma, but to no avail.

### **The Puzzle Comes Together**

However, if we learn this woman is anorexic, our approach changes dramatically and immediately. We realize our initial assumptions and strategies are ludicrous and laughable because they do not bear on the primary issue--a distorted self image.

When this self-starved lady looks in the mirror she sees an obese lady looking back and no amount of persuasion will convince her otherwise.

When this primary issue is addressed, her food intake as well as the frequency of her eating increases. But take note—her increased eating is a

byproduct of confronting the main issue—a distorted self-image. And I use the term image not only from a clinical perspective but a biblical one. Genesis 1:26-27 reads, “And God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” (Emphasis added)

### **Now the Analogy**

How does this illustration apply to the homosexual condition? Just as it is absurd for the anorexic’s family and friends to focus on trying to make her eat, so it is absurd for churches to try and make the homosexual heterosexual.

Society in general and churches in particular mistakenly believe freedom from homosexuality is marrying, having 2.3 children and a dog in the back yard. A 2001 secular study on the possibility of change shows the depth of this ingrained ‘doctrine’. Dr Robert Spitzer, a Columbia University professor interviewed men and women who said they used to be homosexual; I was one of many he questioned. As beneficial as his study was and as much as I appreciate the visibility it gave to change, his study measured heterosexual function of the former homosexual—again missing the real issue.

“But” you ask, “don’t homosexuals need to become heterosexuals?” No! Scripture never states nor implies all people must be heterosexual; it does say explicitly, however, that we are to avoid all forms of sexual immorality, which includes homosexuality. With that in mind have we not at times given the impression that homosexuals must “convert” to heterosexuality? Jesus did not say “Go and make [heterosexuals]”; He said “go and make disciples.”

“But” you ask, “isn’t heterosexuality the opposite of homosexuality?” No! The opposite of homosexuality is holiness!

As I wrote earlier, the term former homosexual is inadequate if not inappropriate. We mistakenly think a person who has found freedom from same-sex attractions is now heterosexual. The former homosexual man or woman may now experience heterosexual feelings, but heterosexuality should never be his nor the churches’ goal. Heterosexuality is in many cases, but not all, a byproduct of the homosexual’s dealing with the primary issues—a distorted self-image and faulty thinking—both of which Satan uses to “gain control.” The church will do well to remember that singleness is not a sin, immorality is.

What all this means is that most of churches' advice to the homosexual misses the mark entirely!

### **Advice Well-Meant, but Wrong**

Telling an adult gay son "you just need to date more; you haven't met the right girl" is senseless. Suggesting your lesbian friend "marry, settle down and everything will work out" is imprudent. Many gay men and women have married, thinking marriage will "heal" them and in most cases the consequences have been disastrous.

Some, hopefully not Christians, suggest a gay man "find a woman who can make you a man." While I've never heard a Christian give such advice, I did have a twenty-seven year old gay man share the following with me. He said he was fifteen when his "Christian" father learned of his homosexual struggle. To 'help' his son the father bought him a subscription to Playboy magazine. That's equivalent to serving roast duck to the anorexic.

God does not heal one form of immorality with another form of immorality! How effective is a machine gun against a tidal wave?

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12).

One married struggler told me his well-meaning pastor recommended he have more sex with his wife. Although the Bible does command conjugal rights (I Cor. 7:3-4), the pastor's advice bypassed the real issue.

Another pastor prayed with an unusually handsome and struggling man, then told him "I've got a really nice girl in the church I want you to meet."

A Christian friend who knows my testimony, met my wife Lisa and said "I can see why you left homosexuality; your wife is beautiful." While he is correct that Lisa is beautiful his statement, like so many, represents a global ignorance on the subject. If attractive women were the remedy for male homosexuality, there would be no gay men.

Many gay men ask me how to cultivate a romantic/sexual attraction to women. I tell them that is not the issue; the issue is a distorted/broken image. (I have often thought how devious our adversary is. He not only confuses men and women regarding their sexual identity, he also confuses them and the church as to what healing really is, thus compounding the problem.)

By dealing with the primary issue, gay men begin to see themselves as masculine and lesbians begin to see themselves as feminine; the same-sex attractions diminish and in many cases opposite-sex attractions occur.

### **Not a Means to an End**

During my own journey out of homosexuality I made a significant discovery--Jesus Christ is not a means to an end. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. I did not go to Christ to get something else, namely heterosexuality. I went to Christ to get HIM!

When we learn this truth, we will witness prison doors falling off their hinges and chains disintegrating.

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## Q & A With Pastor Phil

### **Why are God's judgments so severe as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah?**

This is a question that many have wrestled with – believer and unbeliever alike. This week we read of God's judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Did God deal wrongly with them? Is our God harsh and brutal to man? As our society continues its moral decline, there is an outcry against God, even to the point of calling Him evil. Others believe that God somehow had a change of heart and that He deals far more kindly with people today and no longer judges sin. Are any of these claims and ideologies true? As Christians, we must evaluate all such claims against the Bible to determine if they have any merit.

### **God is Good**

At the heart of these claims is an attack on God's character. This is nothing new. Satan used this very technique with Eve in the Garden of Eden when he questioned God's motive for restricting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We must understand that one of Satan's greatest ambitions is to cause us to doubt God's goodness. The times in which we live bear the evidence that many have fallen prey to this ploy. The Bible teaches us something very different about God's character. Jesus declared that God alone is good (Mark 10:18). Perhaps the greatest single glimpse we get of God's character is when He declared His name to Moses, and in doing so revealed His glory.

*And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." Exodus 34:6,7*

What we discover is that God is merciful and gracious and that He is patient as He deals with sinful man. He abounds with goodness and truth and He forgives iniquity, transgression and sin. Truly God is good, but He is also just. The guilty are not cleared, but become the recipients of judgment. The fact that He upholds righteousness and deals with wickedness is part of His goodness. There is nothing good about turning a blind eye to sin and rebellion.

## No One Is Innocent

Although we understand God's goodness in principle, we still wrestle with some of His judgments. It is disturbing to recount the complete devastation of the flood or the utter destruction of Sodom or the command of God for Saul to annihilate all of the Amalekites. These are sobering accounts in Scripture. They are outright offensive to some and many believers will admit to being shaken. A question often asked is, what about the children? How could God call for the destruction of the innocent? What we fail to realize is that no one is really innocent. The Bible is very clear that mankind as a whole is fallen and corrupt. Even the young are given to sin (Gen 8:21). A child does not need to be taught to lie or steal. Good parenting helps to curb this, but it is nevertheless inherent in their nature. Romans 3:10-12 describes the fallen state of man:

*As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one."*

This verse paints an ugly picture of mankind and yet it is one that is true. No one is innocent before God. It rubs us the wrong way so much that even many professing Christians doubt its truth. Mankind was created for the Lord and His purposes, but has become altogether unprofitable. You must also understand that God is omniscient. He is all knowing. He searches the hearts of every human being and all of the ugliness is clearly in view. Therefore, God is able to rightly judge because He clearly sees and understands the motives and intents of the heart.

## A Skewed Perspective

Another reason we struggle with God's judgment is because we have been influenced by the world around us. The average Christian's worldview has been greatly impacted by the secular ideas of the age. Truth has given way to the popular opinion that people are basically good. We don't see sin for what it is. Instead we are comfortable with it. God's severe judgment upon sin in the Bible helps us to comprehend just how detestable it really is. It should shape our values and cause us to be continually aware of our great dependence upon the Lord for His forgiveness and strengthening. Also affected by worldly ideas is our view of God. Instead of recognizing the holiness of God, we create in our minds a god in our likeness. "God is love" is the popular view. Certainly, there is truth to that, but the idea of a grandfather type figure that exists to meet our needs and

who chuckles at our sin is completely false. God is holy. So much so that sin cannot dwell in His presence. The sinfulness of man has stirred the anger of the Lord. As Christians, we often speak of being saved, but what is it that we are saved from? The true Christian is saved from God's wrath (Romans 5:9), but we must make no mistake that this wrath still abides upon those who are in rebellion. There are those who believe that God has changed – that He no longer punishes sin, but only deals with man in grace. Some think that the God of the Old Testament is different than the God of the New Testament. This isn't true. He is same today as He was when He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Mal 3:6, Jas 1:17, Heb 13:8).

### **God is Longsuffering**

It is also necessary to note the gracious and longsuffering nature of God. Although His wrath is great, He also is very patient in His dealings with a sinful people. Before the flood God waited 120 years before the windows of heaven were opened up. In the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, despite their exceeding wickedness, God was willing to spare the city if only 10 righteous could be found. In both cases God provided a means of escape for the righteous and upheld His name. In our generation God continues to demonstrate His longsuffering nature (2 Pet 3:1-9). People today scoff at the notion that God will again judge the world. Since the time of Christ, Christians have spoken of His return while the world pokes fun at His delay. Meanwhile, God endures great wickedness as He waits for the repentant. Don't be deceived, this window of grace will not remain open forever.

### **Conclusion**

We shouldn't find it strange that God would deal severely with sin. After all, when we are wronged we also want justice. The same people who speak evil of God for His judgment would also demand restitution if they were stolen from. The family of a murdered loved one would be outraged if the murderer went unpunished. We have a double standard. How much more does God, Who is perfect in holiness, have the right to punish sin. Every act of lawlessness is a crime against God and He holds man accountable. We are all guilty, and yet, God in His abounding mercy has made a way of escape. Therefore, let us not turn back. Remember Lot's wife!

# With the Word Bible Commentary

## Genesis 18

**Resting (1).** Resting in the afternoon is a normal practice in the East, and don't forget that Abraham was nearly a hundred years old. Sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is take a nap! The believer's body is God's temple and must be cared for (1 Cor. 6:19–20). (See Mark 6:31.)

**Serving (2–8).** Abraham had no trouble noticing the pilgrims because it was unusual for people to travel in the heat of the day. The visitors were two angels and the Lord Jesus Christ, in one of His preincarnation appearances. Even though he had 318 servants, Abraham served Him personally, and fourteen times he called Him "Lord." Abraham ran from place to place to make certain the meal they were preparing was the very best.

**Listening (9–15).** Abraham stood nearby as the visitors ate, ready to serve them whatever they wanted. But the Lord gave Abraham something better than food: He announced that the promised son would be born within the year. "Where is Sarah your wife?" is the last of three key questions in Genesis (3:9; 4:9; 18:9). The question "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" has been answered by Job (Job 42:2), Jeremiah (Jer. 32:17), and Gabriel (Luke 1:37).

**Interceding (16–33).** Because Abraham was both the friend of God and the servant of God, he shared God's secrets. (See Ps. 25:14; John 15:15; James 2:23.) Lot had been rescued by Abraham's intervention (chap. 14); now he would be rescued by Abraham's intercession. Abraham prayed for the city on the basis of the justice of God, but God saved Lot on the basis of His mercy and grace (19:16, 19). Interceding for the lost and for needy saints is a high and holy privilege that we must not neglect.

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). *With the word Bible commentary* (Ge 18:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## Genesis 19

Because Jesus did not “feel at home” with Lot in Sodom, He sent the two angels to look into the situation for Him. The angels didn’t walk the streets or visit the public places of amusement. They visited a professed believer to see what his home was like. Lot’s wife and family were far from the Lord. The salt had lost its flavor (Matt. 5:13), so what hope was there for the city?

Abraham was visited when it was light, but Lot received the angels at evening (1 John 1:5–10). Abraham’s household obeyed his word as he served the Lord, but Lot’s family only laughed at Lot’s words. Abraham hastened, but Lot lingered and had to be dragged out of the city. Abraham, who lived outside Sodom, had more influence than Lot, who lived in the city.

Lot tried first to plead with the men at the door, and then to bargain with them. God’s approach was to judge them. They loved darkness rather than light (John 3:19).

God did not find ten righteous people, but He spared Lot and his wife and daughters for the sake of Abraham. While we may hate the sins of Sodom, keep in mind that all those people went to eternal judgment. (See Jude 23.) Lot had no tent or altar, and he ended up in a cave committing terrible sins. Were it not for 2 Peter 2:7–8, we might doubt that he was a believer at all. (See Ps. 1:1.)

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). With the word Bible commentary (Ge 19:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## Genesis 20

**Relapse.** The man of faith started walking by sight (v. 11), became frightened (Prov. 29:25), and began scheming (Gen. 12:10ff.). This time, even Sarah lied (v. 5)! Whatever we carry with us from the old life (v. 13) will create problems in the new life. It is one thing to confess our sins but another thing to judge them before God and forsake them (Prov. 28:13). When a marriage must be protected by a lie, the home is in danger.

**Revelation.** God spoke to the heathen king but not to His own friend, Abraham! Although God kept the king from sinning, He allowed Abraham to lie! God called Abraham to be a blessing, but now he had become a curse in the land. God was protecting Sarah, Isaac, and His great plan of salvation.

**Rebuke.** What a humiliating thing to be openly rebuked by a pagan king. God sometimes uses the unsaved to chasten the saved. The fact that Abraham was a believer did not give him license to sin. Unfortunately, years later, Abraham's son Isaac would imitate his father's sin (Gen. 26).

**Restoration.** In those days, the paying of a large sum of money was public "atonement" for guilt; however, sin is never profitable. God did not forsake His friend (Ps. 105:15; 2 Tim. 2:12–13) but honored him in the end and answered his prayer. Financially, Abraham was richer; spiritually, he was poorer. He lost character as well as opportunity to witness and glorify God.

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). With the word Bible commentary (Ge 20:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.







