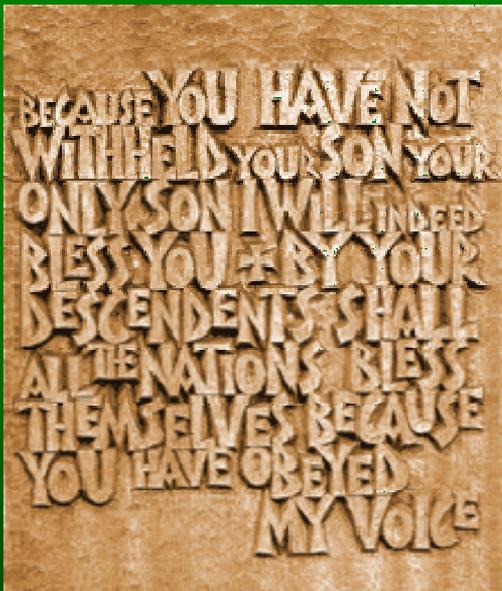




Calvary Chapel

O F R O S W E L L

Thru the Scriptures 2006-08



Genesis 19-25

Jan 12th – 18th, 2006

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,
and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,
for instruction in righteousness,
that the man of God may be complete,
thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Ti 3:16-17)

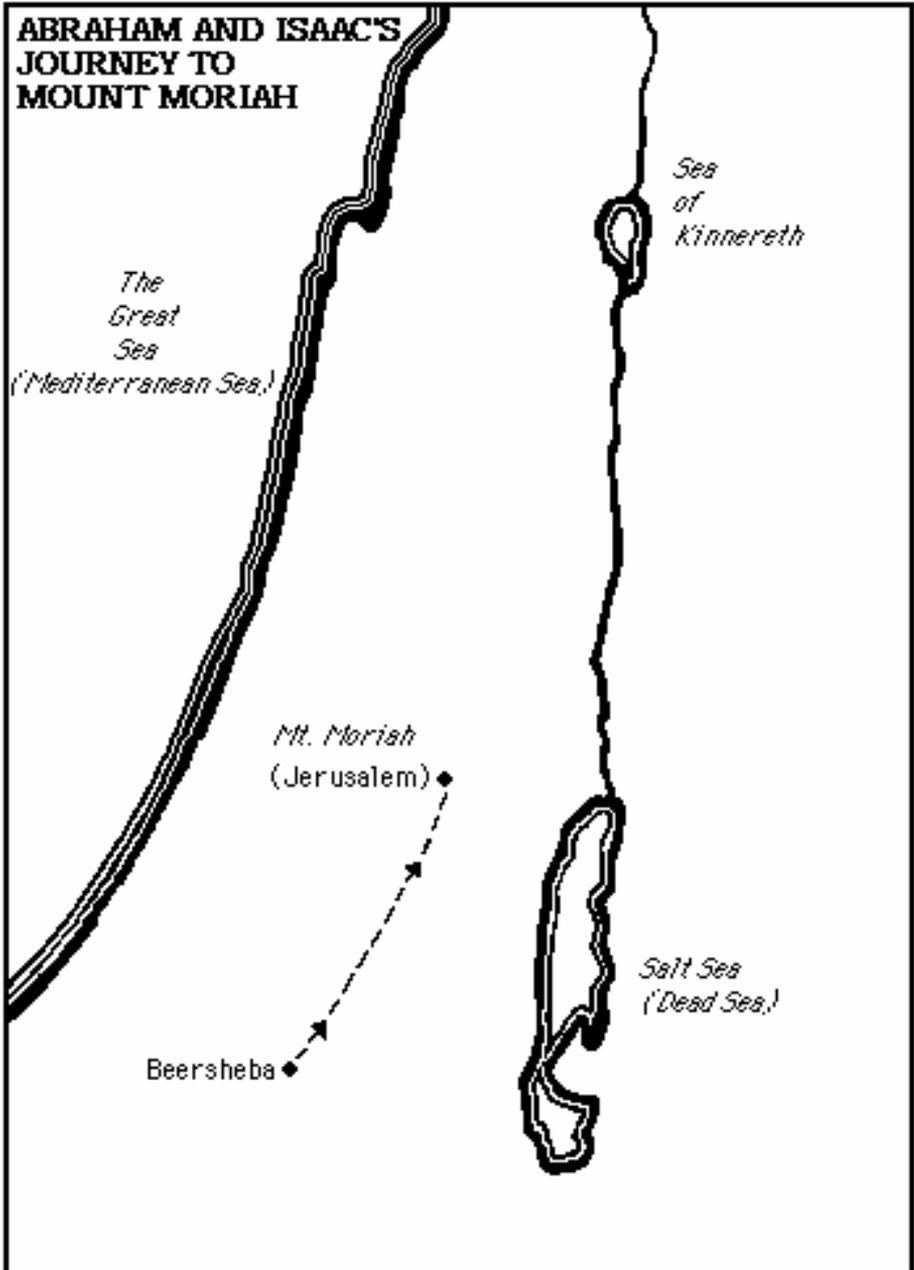


Author: Moses....(God through Moses)



Time: Covering from around 4,000 BC to 1804 BC

Theme: Beginnings



Each day we have questions for you to answer and see if you can get even a little more from the passage you read.

But we also challenge you to find a single verse in each day's reading that you feel God is speaking to you through and spend time pondering it.

Thursday — Genesis 19

What does v.9 show us about Lot and his life in Sodom?

What influence did Lot have on those around him? How many did he influence for God? Why?

What does v.22 teach us about God's judgment? How can this help us in our understanding of the coming rapture?

Friday—Genesis 20

This time it is not a famine that drives Abraham to wander...he just wanders. How is this true of our Christian lives?

Why does Abraham fall back into a sin that he has already been corrected in? How is Abraham rebuked? How is Sarah rebuked? Who are they rebuked by? How can this happen in our lives today?

Saturday— Genesis 21

God kept His word precisely—Isaac is born. What makes Isaac's name a good reminder for Abraham? How does it picture their response to him? Read Gal 4:21-31 How is sending away Ishmael a picture of what needs to happen in our lives? How? What brought this needed separation to light? How does God show His care for Hagar and Ishmael? Lessons?

Sunday— Genesis 22

Chapter 22 is a foreshadowing of the Cross, that takes place on the very place where Jesus would be crucified. See how many pictures or details you can see that show you the cross and Jesus

How is this a picture of things that God needs to still work in our lives? Why?

Monday— Genesis 23

All the land Abraham walked on was his—by promise—yet he did not own any yet. To have even a little—he had to buy it. How is this true of us? Consider this picture—this is the only land that Abraham really owned in his life on earth—yet the promise was so much more. How is this true of us today? How should this impact our lives?

Tuesday— Genesis 24

This chapter is a foreshadowing of the bride of Christ (the church), see how many pictures you can see that illustrate this.

How did the servant pray as he was seeking God's help? Lessons in this?

Wednesday— Genesis 25

What closing lessons do you learn from Abraham's life...and death?

How would you describe Jacob's character from this chapter? Lessons?

How would you describe Esau's character from this chapter? Lessons?

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Chapter 19—Sodom and Gomorrah

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 three articles...which makes this booklet lengthy again. :) Sorry about that.

The first article is fascinating in that it shows some of the archeological discoveries about the location of Sodom and Gomorrah near and even in the Dead Sea in Israel.

The second 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 third 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 with that.

For this reason God gave them over and abandoned them to vile affections and degrading passions. For their women exchanged their natural function for an unnatural and abnormal one, and the men also turned from natural relations with women and were set ablaze (burning out, consumed) with lust for one another—men committing shameful acts with men and suffering in their own bodies and personalities the inevitable consequences and penalty of their wrong-doing and going astray, which was [their] fitting retribution. (Ro 1:26-27, amplified)

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

2

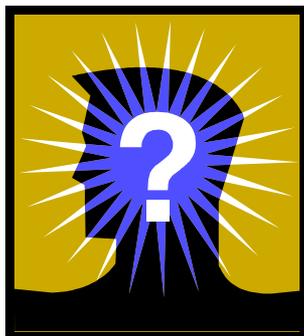
Consider what God tells us about the temptation:

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 Co 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 there be a temptation for any of us be something we cannot handle! In Christ we cannot 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 it that this statement is true?

Someone is going to 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. (Heb 4:15)

Jesus was tempted in every point that we are tempted in...every point! 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 do 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:

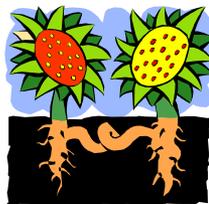
For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. (1 Jn 2:16)

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 Tim 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...but 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 Cor 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 struggle with common temptation!

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” - and 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 Cor 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 Co 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 find that that place was given over to sin—in all of its areas!

and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly;
(2 Pe 2:6)

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 Eze 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. (Eze 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 Co 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.'¹ 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.⁸

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)."9 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."10

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.¹³

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

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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Chapter 20—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 Abram'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 Abram'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. Even write them down. Restructure your thought life according to God's Word! Romans 12:1-2

Chapter 22—God will provide Himself a sacrifice...

This chapter is a fascinating chapter with a depth to it that cannot be plumed.

First—I want you to think about this as in what it shows us about Jesus. Jesus told us that all of these things point to Him (Luke 24:27)—and this chapter does so in amazing ways.

First terms

In theological terms—one of the interesting things that comes in to play in this chapter is what is called “The Law of the First Mention”. What is meant by that, is that often the first mention of a subject or word in the Bible has great significance to its meaning and its depth. With that in mind, consider to key words for the rest of the Bible begin here—love and worship.

The first time love is ever mentioned in the Bible is v.2 Think about that for a few moments and ask yourself why. Why does this understanding of love shape the very foundation of it? How does this understanding of love show the full meaning and extent of love? Of course...you are not just thinking about Abraham and his love for his one and only son...but God and His love...John 3:16!

The first time worship is used in the Bible is in v.5 How does this help us really understand what worship is? How can this help us grow to a better understanding of how to worship.

A Powerful picture

Again, the depth of this is so far beyond words...that I find myself daunted to write a few words. But I am going to do so, with the hopes that it spurs you on to more thoughts.

God calls Abraham to offer His “only son” Isaac as a sacrifice. Two thousand years later another Father would offer His only Son as a sacrifice

God calls Abraham to go to Mount Moriah. Fascinatingly enough on the very same mountain...at the top of Mount Moriah, also called “Calvary”. . God the Father offered His Son, Jesus.

Isaac carried the wood up the hill, and Jesus carried the cross.

Two men travel with Abraham and Isaac, and two thieves witnessed Jesus' crucifixion.

Abraham brought Isaac on a donkey...and Jesus was presented to Israel on a donkey

From Abraham's perspective Isaac died when he set out for Moriah. It was three days later, when they reached their destination, that the Lord gave Isaac back to his father. Figuratively, Isaac was resurrected.

In v.8 Abraham answered Isaac's question about where the sacrifice by saying that God would provide for Himself the lamb...the Lamb! O how true it is!

Abraham calls this place, Yahweh-Yireh (or Jehovah-Jireh) which means "the-Lord-will-Provide"...and as it says in v.14—it was known as the place "in the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided" . The provision it is speaking of...is Christ!

When God promised Abraham that through his seed the nations would be blessed He was speaking of the salvation that would come through the Messiah, Abraham's future heir. The salvation that would be accomplished in this very place!

Every aspect of Abraham's ordeal at Moriah was a picture of the future heir that would be sacrificed for the sins of the world on that very same mountain....wow!

Practical Application

Jesus calls us to "take up our cross..."

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. (Lk 9:23-24)

In a chapter that powerful pictures Jesus on the Cross, we also see a picture of what He is calling for from us. Consider a couple

thoughts. Notice v.12

And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

Does this meant that God did not know what was in Abraham’s heart? The answer is no...but Abraham needed this. Isaac was so important to him, so special—that it began to get dangerous—almost idolatrous. So God calls for this—for Abraham’s sake—to purge and purify our hearts.

God can and does often ask the same thing in our lives. Asking us what we would not surrender...and calling us to surrender everything to Him. It does not mean He always takes it away...but that it is subject to Him. He may speak to you about your job, your house, your car, your friends and even your family...and ask you if you would sacrifice it for Him....the real answer to that question will really show you were your heart is. God is calling us to lose our life...and only in losing it...can we keep it. Think that through a little bit with Abraham and his sacrifice of Isaac.

With that in mind, I am going to include an article next by AW Tozer that has really impacted me from this chapter and I pray it is helpful to you.

The Pursuit of God

by A.W. Tozer

Chapter 2 : The Blessedness of Possessing Nothing

*Blessed are the poor in spirit:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Mat 5:3*

Before the Lord God made man upon the earth He first prepared for him by creating a world of useful and pleasant things for his sustenance and delight. In the Genesis account of the creation these are called simply 'things.' They were made for man's uses, but they were meant always to be external to the man and subservient to him. In the deep heart of the man was a shrine where none but God was worthy to come. Within him was God; without, a thousand gifts which God had showered upon him.

But sin has introduced complications and has made those very gifts of God a potential source of ruin to the soul.

Our woes began when God was forced out of His central shrine and 'things' were allowed to enter. Within the human heart 'things' have taken over. Men have now by nature no peace within their hearts, for God is crowned there no longer, but there in the moral dusk stubborn and aggressive usurpers fight among themselves for first place on the throne.

This is not a mere metaphor, but an accurate analysis of our real spiritual trouble. There is within the human heart a tough fibrous root of fallen life whose nature is to possess, always to possess. It covets 'things' with a deep and fierce passion. The pronouns 'my' and 'mine' look innocent enough in print, but their constant and universal use is significant. They express the real nature of the old Adamic man better than a thousand volumes of theology could do. They are verbal symptoms of our deep disease. The roots of our hearts have grown down into things, and we dare not pull up one rootlet lest we die. Things have become necessary to us, a development never originally intended. God's gifts now take the place of God, and the whole course of nature is upset by the monstrous substitution.

Our Lord referred to this tyranny of things when He said to His disciples, *'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.'* (Mat_16:24-25).

Breaking this truth into fragments for our better understanding, it would seem that there is within each of us an enemy which we tolerate at our peril. Jesus called it 'life' and 'self,' or as we would say, the self-life. Its chief characteristic is its possessiveness: the words 'gain' and 'profit' suggest this. To allow this enemy to live is in the end to lose everything. To repudiate it and give up all for Christ's sake is to lose nothing at last, but to preserve everything unto life eternal. And possibly also a hint is given here as to the only effective way to destroy this foe: it is by the Cross: 'Let him take up his cross and follow me.'

The way to deeper knowledge of God is through the lonely valleys of soul poverty and abnegation of all things. The blessed ones who possess the Kingdom are they who have repudiated every external thing and have rooted from their hearts all sense of possessing. They are 'poor in spirit.' They have reached an inward state paralleling the outward circumstances of the common beggar in the streets of Jerusalem; that is what the word 'poor' as Christ used it actually means. These blessed poor are no longer slaves to the tyranny of things. They have broken the yoke of the oppressor; and this they have done not by fighting but by surrendering. Though free from all sense of possessing, they yet possess all things. 'Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

Let me exhort you to take this seriously. It is not to be understood as mere Bible teaching to be stored away in the mind along with an inert mass of other doctrines. It is a marker on the road to greener pastures, a path chiseled against the steep sides of the mount of God. We dare not try to by-pass it if we would follow on in this holy pursuit. We must ascend a step at a time. If we refuse one step we bring our progress to an end.

As is frequently true, this New Testament principle of spiritual life finds its best illustration in the Old Testament. In the story of Abraham and Isaac we have a dramatic picture of the surrendered life as well as an excellent commentary on the first Beatitude.

Abraham was old when Isaac was born, old enough indeed to have been his grandfather, and the child became at once the delight and idol of his heart. From that moment when he first stooped to take the tiny form awkwardly in his arms he was an eager love slave of his son. God went out of His way to comment on the strength of this affection. And it is not hard to understand. The baby represented everything sacred to his father's heart: the promises of God, the covenants, the hopes of the years and the long messianic dream. As he watched him grow from babyhood to young manhood the heart of the old man was knit closer and closer with the life of his son, till at last the relationship bordered upon the perilous. It was then that God stepped in to save both father and son from the consequences of an unclesed love.

'Take now thy son,' said God to Abraham, *'thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.'* (Gen_22:2) The sacred writer spares us a close-up of the agony that night on the slopes near Beersheba when the aged man had it out with his God, but respectful imagination may view in awe the bent form and convulsive wrestling alone under the stars.

Possibly not again until a Greater than Abraham wrestled in the Garden of Gethsemane did such mortal pain visit a human soul. If only the man himself might have been allowed to die. That would have been easier a thousand times, for he was old now, and to die would have been no great ordeal for one who had walked so long with God. Besides, it would have been a last sweet pleasure to let his dimming vision rest upon the figure of his stalwart son who would live to carry on the Abrahamic line and fulfill in himself the promises of God made long before in Ur of the Chaldees.

How should he slay the lad! Even if he could get the consent of his wounded and protesting heart, how could he reconcile the act with the promise, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called'? This was Abraham's trial by fire, and he did not fail in the crucible. While the stars still shone like sharp white points above the tent where the sleeping Isaac lay, and long before the gray dawn had begun to lighten the east, the old saint had made up his mind. He would offer his son as God had directed him to do, and then trust God to raise him from the dead. This, says the writer to the Hebrews, was the solution his

aching heart found sometime in the dark night, and he rose 'early in the morning' to carry out the plan. It is beautiful to see that, while he erred as to God's method, he had correctly sensed the secret of His great heart. And the solution accords well with the New Testament Scripture, *'Whosoever will lose... for my sake shall find...'*

God let the suffering old man go through with it up to the point where He knew there would be no retreat, and then forbade him to lay a hand upon the boy. To the wondering patriarch He now says in effect, 'It's all right, Abraham. I never intended that you should actually slay the lad. I only wanted to remove him from the temple of your heart that I might reign unchallenged there. I wanted to correct the perversion that existed in your love. Now you may have the boy, sound and well. Take him and go back to your tent. Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.'

Then heaven opened and a voice was heard saying to him, *'By myself I have sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.'*

The old man of God lifted his head to respond to the Voice, and stood there on the mount strong and pure and grand, a man marked out by the Lord for special treatment, a friend and favorite of the Most High. Now he was a man wholly surrendered, a man utterly obedient, a man who possessed nothing. He had concentrated his all in the person of his dear son, and God had taken it from him. God could have begun out on the margin of Abraham's life and worked inward to the center; He chose rather to cut quickly to the heart and have it over in one sharp act of separation. In dealing thus He practiced an economy of means and time. It hurt cruelly, but it was effective.

I have said that Abraham possessed nothing. Yet was not this poor man rich? Everything he had owned before was still his to enjoy:

sheep, camels, herds, and goods of every sort. He had also his wife and his friends, and best of all he had his son Isaac safe by his side. He had everything, but he possessed nothing. There is the spiritual secret. There is the sweet theology of the heart which can be learned only in the school of renunciation. The books on systematic theology overlook this, but the wise will understand.

After that bitter and blessed experience I think the words 'my' and 'mine' never had again the same meaning for Abraham. The sense of possession which they connote was gone from his heart. Things had been cast out forever. They had now become external to the man. His inner heart was free from them. The world said, 'Abraham is rich,' but the aged patriarch only smiled. He could not explain it to them, but he knew that he owned nothing, that his real treasures were inward and eternal.

There can be no doubt that this possessive clinging to things is one of the most harmful habits in the life. Because it is so natural it is rarely recognized for the evil that it is; but its outworkings are tragic. We are often hindered from giving up our treasures to the Lord out of fear for their safety; this is especially true when those treasures are loved relatives and friends. But we need have no such fears. Our Lord came not to destroy but to save. Everything is safe which we commit to Him, and nothing is really safe which is not so committed.

Our gifts and talents should also be turned over to Him. They should be recognized for what they are, God's loan to us, and should never be considered in any sense our own. We have no more right to claim credit for special abilities than for blue eyes or strong muscles. *'For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?'*

The Christian who is alive enough to know himself even slightly will recognize the symptoms of this possession malady, and will grieve to find them in his own heart. If the longing after God is strong enough within him he will want to do something about the matter. Now, what should he do?

First of all he should put away all defense and make no attempt to excuse himself either in his own eyes or before the Lord. Whoever defends himself will have himself for his defense, and he will have no other; but let him come defenseless before the Lord and he will have for his defender no less than God Himself. Let the inquiring Christian trample under foot every slippery trick of his deceitful heart and insist upon frank and open relations with the Lord.

Then he should remember that this is holy business. No careless or casual dealings will suffice. Let him come to God in full determination to be heard. Let him insist that God accept his all, that He take things out of his heart and Himself reign there in power. It may be he will need to become specific, to name things and people by their names one by one. If he will become drastic enough he can shorten the time of his travail from years to minutes and enter the good land long before his slower brethren who coddle their feelings and insist upon caution in their dealings with God.

Let us never forget that such a truth as this cannot be learned by rote as one would learn the facts of physical science. They must be experienced before we can really know them. We must in our hearts live through Abraham's harsh and bitter experiences if we would know the blessedness which follows them. The ancient curse will not go out painlessly; the tough old miser within us will not lie down and die obedient to our command. He must be torn out of our heart like a plant from the soil; he must be extracted in agony and blood like a tooth from the jaw. He must be expelled from our soul by violence as Christ expelled the money changers from the temple. And we shall need to steel ourselves against his piteous begging, and to recognize it as springing out of self-pity, one of the most reprehensible sins of the human heart.

If we would indeed know God in growing intimacy we must go this way of renunciation. And if we are set upon the pursuit of God He will sooner or later bring us to this test. Abraham's testing was, at the time, not known to him as such, yet if he had taken some course other than the one he did, the whole history of the Old Testament would have been different. God would have found His man, no doubt, but the loss to Abraham would have been tragic beyond the telling. So we will be brought one by one to the testing place, and we may never know when we are there. At that testing place there

will be no dozen possible choices for us; just one and an alternative, but our whole future will be conditioned by the choice we make.

Father, I want to know Thee, but my coward heart fears to give up its toys. I cannot part with them without inward bleeding, and I do not try to hide from Thee the terror of the parting. I come trembling, but I do come. Please root from my heart all Those things which I have cherished so long and which have become a very part of my living self, so that Thou mayest enter and dwell there without a rival. Then shalt Thou make the place of Thy feet glorious. Then shall my heart have no need of the sun to shine in it, for Thyself wilt be the light of it, and there shall be no night there. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Chapter 24...A Bride is chosen and called...

Genesis 24 is the longest chapter in Genesis, and its account is a wonderful one for us to consider.

There are some wonderful and practical pictures for us in seeking God's will.

- We see purposes that are firm—as Abraham wants a bride for his son, but not just accepting one from the world
- We see dependence on God through prayer in the servant, as he seeks God's guidance in the way.
- We see how God guides as he later says “as I was in the way, God lead me” - God directed his course as he stepped out in faith.
- We see God getting the credit for all that is provided
- We see the servant undistracted from his purpose, even for a little while.

Further, you could see in this chapter a picture of God putting together a marriage. Notice these things:

- We need to want God's will for a spouse - He knows best
- A spouse needs to be “in the family” - needs to be a Christian. Christians are not to be unequally yoked in a marriage
- A spouse who won't “move” into the place of God's guidance, ministry and purpose...is not to be accepted—we are not to go back into the world for a spouse.
- A key in finding the right spouse is active and dependant prayer
- Another key is looking for one who has spiritual fruit in their lives—who is gracious, a hard worker and hospitable
- Be alert to what God is doing - providence

Yet, the most wonderful part of this chapter, is what it shows us about Christ, and the picture of what God is doing in and for Christ. In this chapter, Abraham sends out a servant to find a bride for Isaac. In this, we see a picture of God the Father, seeking a bride for His son.

Abraham in this analogy is like God the Father. We see him in this analogy in chapter 22 as well, when as a father surrenders up his one and only son for sacrifice.

Isaac in this analogy is a type of Christ. In Chapter 22 he was the one who was being sacrificed and in a typological way—he was.

- Interestingly, we don't read of Isaac after he goes up the mount in Chapter 22 until chapter 24—when he meets a bride. It pictures in a typological way—how after the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, He ascended into heaven, and we won't see Him again—until His bride is presented to Him—Rev 21.

Rebekah—the bride for Isaac is a picture of the “Bride of Christ” - speaking of the church. (Rev 21:9)

The servant in this picture is a type of the Holy Spirit.

- The servant is unnamed in this chapter. And in a wonderful way, Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will not draw attention to Himself—but point all to Christ (John 16:14)
- In Genesis 15:2 we learn the possible name of this servant—Eliezer. Eliezer means “comforter”. Comforter is a title that Jesus told us (John 14:16, 26; 15:26)
- The servant woos a bride for his master with gifts, and stories about life with his master, and life in his master's house. In the same way, it is these things the Holy Spirit shows us to draw us after and to Christ. The Spirit gives us tokens of our Master's wealth—the first fruits of His blessings. (Eph 1:13)
- Again, the servant does draw attention to himself or speak of himself to the bride—but talks about his master and his riches. So again, the Spirit always points to Christ!

The servant brings the girl home and that's when we see Isaac. In verse 63 Isaac comes out to meet his bride. What an awesome picture! After Jesus rose from the dead He ascended into heaven out of our sight. Since then, the Father has sent a Comforter into the world, the Holy Spirit, to search out a bride for His Son, Jesus. In the New Testament, the Church is called “the virgin bride of Christ”. We are the bride! At the moment, Jesus is out of our sight. We don't see Him. The Spirit speaks of Him, and shares His blessings. He testifies to our hearts of His power, wisdom, and love. He provides us a foretaste of the lavish blessings awaiting us when we get to our new home and live forever with the Master. The Spirit woos us to come and follow, but the next time we see Jesus is when He comes to greet His bride.

As the Servant draws the bride for his master, he does not force her but his gentle, but persuasive. So God does not force us into a relationship with Him. He appeals to us, but as Rebekah had to decide for herself whether she would go or not—so God appeals to us, but the decision is left to us whether we will go out and be His.

Rebekah had never seen Isaac, yet she was convinced to spend rest of life with. This is true of the church today.

(1 Pet 1:8) "whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,"

The Spirit appeals to us right now, not to postpone our pursuit of Christ. Yet, the world will be pulling at us like her family to put it off and wait till later. But the Spirit says now!

(2 Cor 6:2) "For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

God chose Rebekah, yet Rebekah choose Isaac

If you are a Christian, God chose you....yet you are called to chose Christ....a mystery yes....but so wonderful.

A Spiritual Example

By Warren Wiersbe

In a spiritual sense, the servant is a picture of the Holy Spirit whose work is to bring the lost to Christ and thus make up His bride. The servant's name is not given, for the ministry of the Spirit is to point to Christ and glorify Him. Note how often the servant mentioned his master and his master's son. He lived to please his master, for the word "master" is found twenty-two times in this chapter. The Spirit has been sent to represent Christ and do the Savior's will here on earth. The servant carried with him a portion of his master's wealth (vv. 10, 22, 30, 53), just as the Holy Spirit today "is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14, NIV), sharing with us but a small portion of the great wealth we shall one day enjoy in glory. The servant thought only of his master and his master's will. In fact, he was so anxious to finish his task that he cared nothing for food (v. 33; John 4:31–34). The servant received his orders from his master and did not change them one bit. It is interesting to conjecture if the servant taught the bride as they journeyed, and revealed the bridegroom to her. "He shall glorify Me," said Christ concerning the Holy Spirit (John 16:14).

In Rebekah we see a picture of Christ and His church. Rebekah was a pure virgin, just as the church will be when the marriage in heaven takes place (Rev. 19:7–8). Note that Rebekah identified with the flock, just as the church is both the bride of Christ and the flock (John 10:7–18).

Rebekah had to make an important decision: would she stay home with her family and continue to be a servant, or would she by faith believe the words of the servant and go to be with Isaac, a man she had never seen? Certainly there were obstacles in the way: her brother wanted her to stay awhile (v. 55); the trip would be long and difficult; Isaac was a pilgrim without a settled home; and she would have to leave her loved ones.

The world often advises the sinner to wait, just as Laban advised his sister. (Note, however, that when it came to getting material things, Laban could be in a hurry, vv. 28–31. We wonder if he invited the servant home out of courtesy or covetousness!) Sinners generally are not in a hurry about the salvation of their souls. Up to

this point, Rebekah had been hastening (vv. 18–20, 28), but now they wanted her to slow down. “Seek the Lord while He may be found (Isa. 55:6, NIV).

We cannot help but admire her decision: “I will go.” This act of faith (“Whom having not seen you love...” 1 Peter 1:8, nkjv) changed her life. She was changed from being a servant to being a bride, from the loneliness of the world to the joy of love and companionship, from her poverty into Isaac’s wealth. Did she see all of Isaac’s wealth? Of course not! That would be impossible! Did she know all about him? No. But what she saw and heard convinced her that she must go. Similarly, with lost sinners today, the Spirit speaks and shows them the things of Christ, sufficient for them to make a right decision. We left Isaac (as far as the record is concerned) on Mt. Moriah, for 22:19 mentions Abraham alone. Isaac is a picture of our Lord who went to Calvary to die for us, then returned to heaven to wait for His bride. In chapter 24, the servant (the Holy Spirit) went forth to seek the bride. Then, when the bride approached, Isaac appeared to receive her. What a scene, it may take place today! Just as it was “eventide” when they met, so it will be dark in this world when Christ returns for His bride.

Rebekah’s faith was rewarded. Her name was recorded in God’s Word; she shared Isaac’s love and wealth, and she became an important part of God’s plan. Had she refused to go, she would have died an unknown woman. “He who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:17, nkjv).