



The Story of Sodom Revisited: Why Christians Should Stop Referring to Homosexual Acts as “Sodomy”

By Eric Holmberg, 1/10/2011

Introduction

There are few narratives in the Bible that have generated more confusion, controversy, and consternation than the one surrounding Sodom and Gomorrah’s sin and subsequent judgment. (Gen. 19)

The spate of “gay” theology and apologetics over the last few decades has only added to the confusion. And even conservative/traditional Christians who believe that the “sin of Sodom” was primarily, even exclusively *homosexuality* find themselves at a loss trying to make sense of other aspects of the story; for example “righteous Lot’s” (2 Pet. 2:7) willingness to offer his two virgin daughters to be gang-raped in order to protect two travelers staying in his home. (Gen. 19:8) What really happened on that dark day in human history? And what lessons and applications can we draw from it?

This essay is an attempt to answer these important questions by putting aside the traditions¹, both liberal and conservative, that have grown up around Genesis 19 and the nearly twenty other verses in the Bible that reference it; to instead look at them afresh through the lens of scripture and the over-arching themes of the Bible. Some of what follows is mildly conjectural. For reasons that only God knows the Holy Spirit didn’t provide us with enough data points to be able to nail down every facet of this fascinating and significant narrative. But I believe the insights and explanations I present here best fit scripture to scripture and fulfill the primary purpose for which the Bible was given to us by God: to be profitable to us as laborers in the vineyard of

¹ A good example of a commonly accepted tradition that is actually contrary to the clear teaching of scripture is the ubiquitous belief that there were three wise men that came with gifts to present the new-born Messiah as he lay in the manger. In point of Biblical fact, Jesus was no longer an infant and was no longer living in a stable when the magi showed up. (We also don’t know for sure if there were only three of them.) And to show how deeply those traditions can infest our thinking, during this last Christmas I watched a special on the first Noel that featured all manner of scholars and archeological discoveries that supposedly granted us a much better picture of what the first Christmas was like. These “scholars” proceeded to talk about their new discoveries about the magi, the star, etc. But where did it all intersect with the young Jesus? In a manger in Bethlehem!

this earth, teaching, correcting, and training us in righteousness. (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16)

The LORD knows that at this point in redemptive history, as the Western world is progressively becoming comfortable, even celebrative, of homosexuality, it is *vital* that the Church have its collective mind renewed and empowered by the “washing of the water of the Word of God.” (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:26)

Abraham is a Key

It has been famously said that a text without a context is a mere pretext. Far too often Christians succumb to reading stories and events in the Bible, particularly those found in the Old Testament, as stand-alone tales, removed from their larger context. Like the fables of Aesop, each story – whether David and Goliath or the bizarre events surrounding the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah – is to be read to glean a specific moral lesson rather than as a small section of the much larger tapestry of redemptive history.

So let’s begin by backing up a bit and factoring Abraham into the narrative of Sodom in Genesis 19.² A brief review and timeline would be helpful here:



- We are first introduced to Abraham (at the time his name was Abram (meaning *father*) which was later changed by God to Abraham (*father of many*), but for clarity’s sake I will refer to him by his more common name throughout this essay) as he leaves his homeland of Ur (in Babylon) along with his wife (Sarai, whose name later changed by God to Sarah), his father Terah, and his nephew Lot – the only son of his dead brother, Haran. An important and oft-neglected fact to consider here: Abraham and Sarah were childless at this point and would remain famously so for many years. That meant that Lot at the time would have been Abraham’s primary heir.
- They then sojourned in a town, interestingly named Haran³, for some extended period of time. It is here where Terah dies at the ripe old age of two hundred and five.

² We can actually go further back than that; for example to Genesis 4:16 when Cain, the archetypal fallen man, moved and settled to the east of Eden. Sodom was to the east of where Abraham had built one of the first outposts of the City of God (an archetypal new Eden) in the nascent promised land of Canaan.

- God then instructs Abraham to, in effect, put his past behind him and follow the LORD in a faith journey to a new promised land. Abraham at the time was seventy-five-years-old. He took with him Sarah and Lot as well as all the people and possessions he had acquired during his time in Haran.
- Time and events continue to be compressed, with a lot happening between his leaving Haran at age seventy-five and the next time we are specifically given his age: eighty-six, when Ishmael was born. (Gen. 16:16) In the intervening eleven years, Abraham journeys and settles for some period of time in Canaan; then in the hill country to the east of Bethel; then on to Negeb (Negev); then a famine hits and they move to Egypt; then back to Negeb; then full-circle to the same hill country east of Bethel. Then (attention: important plot development) some strife begins to develop between Abraham's entourage and Lot's. He goes to his nephew and heir and advises that they split up, giving Lot first dibs on the land around them. Significantly, the "oldest son", like Cain and others before Lot, chose to go east – in Lot's case to the environs of Sodom, a city/town populated by people who were "wicked, great sinners against the LORD." (Gen. 13:13) Abraham stays put and God restates His promise to him (Gen. 13:14-17).; providing more specifics as to its scope: that the land to the north, south, east (which would include, ironically, the land that Lot moved to possess, including Sodom) and west would eventually belong to Abraham and his descendents (who would be as numerous as the stars of heaven) forever. In other words (using the light of the new covenant to interpret the old), those who are truly of Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:15-29) – the elect/God's chosen people/called-out ones/the *ecclesia*/Israel/the Church – will eventually inherit the entire planet. (Can anyone shout, "Hallelujah!") Abraham then moves up the road a small piece and settles in Hebron – a likely source for the ethnic label Hebrew, used for the first time to describe the first Hebrew, Abraham, in the next chapter. (Gen. 14:13)
- We are still in the same eleven-year year time period, but I am separating this out with its own bullet point because of its great significance in our quest to better understand Genesis 19. Four

³ The fact that the town had the same name as Abraham's dead brother – and the patriarch Terah's dead son – can't be mere coincidence. Perhaps they settled the land and named the town after their departed kinsman. Perhaps the town already existed with that name and they settled there out of a sense of nostalgia or because they viewed it as a sign. We don't know. But we do know that this place of sojourn represented, in one way or another, a sense of clinging to the dead past. Terah died there in Haran and God then told Abraham in effect to forsake his past and by faith move to an unknown land that the LORD would show him. Old things had passed away, behold all things were about to become new.

kings form an alliance and make war against five other kings and their tiny kingdoms, including Bera, king of Sodom, and Birsha, king of Gomorrah. The attackers prevail, sack the cities and part of the spoil they take from Sodom is Lot, his family, servants and all his possessions. Abraham rises to the defense of his nephew and potential heir, deploying three-hundred and eighteen men, born, raised and trained in his own house, and goes in hot pursuit.⁴ They prevail and Lot and company are rescued. But not only Lot; *the kings and citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah are saved as well.*⁵

Then comes one of my favorite vignettes in the entire Bible: after God's warrior successfully defeats His enemies (the Bible actually references the "slaughter of the kings" (Gen. 14:17)), two very



different men representing two very different kingdoms come out to meet and bless him. The first is the mysterious Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High. Most scholars view him as a *christophany*, an appearance of Christ in the Old Testament. That he blesses Abraham, offering him a proto-communion of bread and wine – doing so in specific response to Abraham defeating God's

enemies – and then Abraham responding by giving a tithe to Melchizedek teems with historical/redemptive significance that we don't have time to develop here. (see Hebrews 17) The second person is the king of Sodom who offers Abraham the spoils taken from his city in exchange for its citizens. *Abraham refuses the spoil*; in effect saying that God and God alone was his source. (Gen. 14: 21-24)

Now let's pause here and draw from the story so far two important points and inferences. First, we don't know for certain how old Abraham was when he saved Lot – *and Sodom's* – bacon. But given all the things that happened from when he left Haran (at seventy-five) to the "slaughter of the kings," I think it would be safe to say that most of the eleven years (less nine-months for gestation) before Ishmael was born had elapsed. So let's say that our father in the faith was eighty-four or thereabouts when he strapped on his sword. (We'll

⁴ This is a great and significant story in and of itself; particularly the peculiar inclusion of the exact number of men. In the interest of time, I will leave this alone here but point those interested to James Jordan's excellent essay [Abram's 318 Men](#).

⁵ What a powerful picture of the power and scope of God's redemptive purposes! Even wicked cultures can be saved by the Gospel!

come back to this.) Second, put yourself in the head of the king of Sodom or one of its citizens. What would you have thought about Abraham at this point?

Well for starters:

1. He was one bad dude; he kicked the rear ends of those who kicked our rear ends. So we hope we never have to tangle with him.
2. Tangling with him is a real possibility though. First, everyone eventually did back in those days. Second, it's rumored that he serves the one, true God; certainly his incredible victory would suggest some type of supernatural assistance. We all hope that Abraham's God doesn't exist because we are practicing things that are completely contrary to His nature and commands. But if He does, He could very well sick Abraham on us eventually. On top of that, we have his cousin Lot living among us. He's a follower of this same God, though no where near as radical as Abraham. But still, we often see him sitting in the gates of our city, casting disapproving glances and even reproofing us for our actions. (Gen. 19:1ff)
3. To make matters worse, *he refused our gift*. Does he think he's too good for us; that our wealth is beneath him or tainted in some way? He says he would rather have his God on his side than us. The nerve and arrogance of the man! We certainly can't trust him. We better keep a sharp eye on him.

Now back to our review and timeline:

- Abraham is again visited by the LORD, the promise to inherit the land through a son is again expressed, and Abraham cuts a covenant with God through a very exact and prophetic ritual. (Gen. 15)
- Sarah and Abraham try to help God out by producing a son through a surrogate mother, Sarah's female Egyptian servant, Hagar. (Oooops!) Ishmael is born to Abraham when he is eighty-six and trouble between Sarah and Hagar ensues. (Gen. 16)
- Thirteen years later, when Abraham is ninety-nine, the LORD again appears and re-states His promises to him, providing even more specifics, including the name of the promised son that was to be born to him through Sarah, Isaac. The covenant of circumcision is established and Abraham, all his men (Ouch!) and the thirteen-year-old Ishmael are circumcised. (Gen. 17)
- Now the story begins to come to the one of several climaxes as time slows down and more details are revealed. One gets the

distinct impression that not much time elapses between the circumcisions and when three “men” appear to Abraham. We know from the next chapter that two of them are angels. Again, many if not most scholars suggest that the third “man” was another *chistophany*; that it was, in fact, Jesus under His not infrequent guise as the “angel of the LORD.” (see Gen. 18:10,17,22) The LORD promises that in a year’s time the promised child will be born. And then He reveals to Abraham that they are on their way to judge Sodom and Gomorrah because “the outcry against (them) is great and their sin is very grave.” (vs. 20). Abraham responds with an extraordinary prototype of intercessory prayer that literally drips with historical/redemptive implications.⁶ Rather than hating and wanting to conquer the city like the people of Sodom probably expected, Abraham shows them love and grace as he prays that God would have mercy on them.

Now On With Our Tale

With all these snapshots in place, we are ready to visit the controversial account of Sodom’s sin and subsequent destruction in Genesis chapter 19.



Two travelers – we know them to be angels (the “angel of the LORD,” Jesus is no longer manifestly present) – arrive in Sodom, having traveled from the west, from the land of Abraham. Lot greets them and takes them to his home.

Now what would the citizens of Sodom have made of this? There is some conjecture here, but given what we have considered above, allow me to paint the most likely picture. Sixteen or so years before they had gotten a vivid impression of how powerful and potentially dangerous Abraham was. He had handily defeated the army that had conquered them. And he had rejected their gift and thus proved to him that he was no warm and fuzzy ally. Furthermore, his God was the antithesis of everything they stood for. And his cousin (can’t mess with him because it might tick off his uncle) – who perhaps had become more zealous in his faith after experiencing his miraculous deliverance – had taken to sitting in the city gate and

⁶ Again, there is no time to develop this fascinating account here, one deserving of its own essay or even a book. For an outstanding introduction I would encourage you to listen to Tim Keller’s sermon on the subject, “Abraham’s Prayer for the City.” You can download it [here](#).

representing the righteous standards of this same God; standards that they were shattering left and right. And now it's happening, what we have feared. Two mysterious men (there is something about them, a bearing that speaks of authority and the power to back it up) have showed up, coming from the land of Abraham. Lot has intercepted them and now they are at his house. What are they up to? Well, what else? They are no doubt planning to take over our city; the very thing we would do to them if we thought we could pull it off.

They have to be stopped.

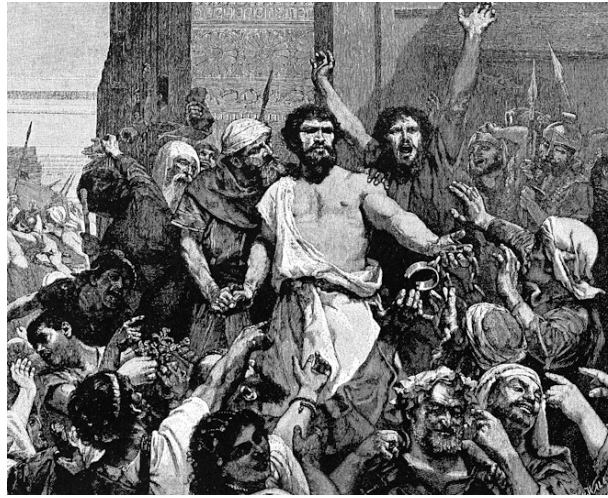
So every last man, "both young and old," (vs. 4) comes out and surrounds Lot's home. And "they" called to Lot and said "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." (vs. 5). Now there is no doubt what they meant by this. "Know" (Hebrew *yada`*) can mean a number of things, including most commonly, to comprehend, understand, to become acquainted with; to, in other words, simply "know." But this particular meaning – which some "gay" apologists have suggested – is far too innocuous to make sense of Lot's charge two verses later that they not act so "wickedly." Clearly, this "knowing" was along the lines of another use of the word *yada`*: "Now Adam knew (*yada`*) Eve his wife, and she conceived..." In other words, they wanted to have sex with, or more specifically anally rape, the two men. (Sorry for the brief graphic description but we have to deal with the reality of what the Bible is presenting here.)

Now this is clearly a horrible, abominable act they wanted to perpetrate. And even many if not most "gay" scholars and apologists readily agree; that one of the sins of Sodom was their desire to rape and humiliate these guests to their city. (They then go on to say that this has no bearing on loving, consensual sexual acts between men. More on that in a moment.)

The big and oft-neglected question here is, "Who was the 'they' that wanted to do this?" Every man, young and old, in the city? Well, how likely was it that every thirteen-year-old as well as octogenarian (and older) wanted to personally rape these men? More to the point, were the two men who at that very moment were engaged to Lot's daughters interested in raping the men, in the very presence of their future father-in-law and brides no less?

I doubt it. No city could function for more than a few days if it was that insane; that consumed with demonic lust and hyper-nihilism.

I want to suggest that this wicked city – and wicked it was, likely more than any wicked city we can cite in modern times – was still like in type if not degree to the wicked cultures (e.g. Nazi Germany or Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge) of our era. There were some genuinely demonic *Übermensch*⁷, men with a breathtaking capacity to commit atrocities, leading and agitating amongst a mass of *sheep*, followers who could be inspired, propagandized, shocked, seduced or fooled into embracing, at least to some degree, their agenda. So what Lot and the two angels were confronting was more than likely a whipped-up crowd, scared to death that their world was about to be shattered by these conspirators and Abraham’s army and wanting to put a stop to it. But likely the men who shouted at Lot, demanding that he send out the two visitors (Abraham’s spies?) so that they could rape and humiliate them and then send them packing were just these *Übermensch*. Many in the crowd would have just stood by, perhaps shouting their approval and insults. Others – likely Lot’s future son-in-laws, for example – would have stood silently by, perhaps embarrassed and averting their eyes but nonetheless tacitly consenting to this great evil. This is what sheep do in demonic times: go with the flow; whether it’s in Sodom circa 1890 B.C. or the suburbs of Auschwitz in 1941.



Now why is this distinction important? Well for one thing, it helps make some sense of Lot’s response. For we know that he was not only Abraham’s nephew, he was also a brother in the same faith of his uncle. We know that the angels warned him about the judgment that was coming and physically intervened when he “lingered” (vs. 16) – something that clearly demonstrates God’s concern and covenant protection for him and his family. And most importantly, we have these words from the Apostle Peter:

⁷ An ideal posited by Friedrich Nietzsche in his seminal work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. It has been variously translated as “overman” or “superman” – but in essence it means, at least in this essay, a person who has moved beyond the categories of good and evil, who has utterly rejected the supposed “other-worldliness” – along with the moral values – of Christianity, and is prepared to do whatever is necessary to create the world that they have envisioned as an ideal one. Hitler, not surprisingly, was said to have loved the concept.



"...and if (God) rescued *righteous* Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that *righteous* man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his *righteous* soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard."

2 Peter 2: 7 (emphasis mine)

How can we reconcile this description of Lot's character and

his place as a covenant follower of YAWEH with his response to the wannabe rapists?

"Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." (vs. 8)

Most of us would agree that the only thing more disturbing than the specter of Lot's visitors being homosexually raped was Lot's willingness to offer his virgin daughter's to be raped in their place. The idea is so horrific and reflects so negatively on the reputation of God's chosen people (and hence God Himself) that atheists and skeptics love to trot out verses like this to "prove" that Biblical faith is irrational and even immoral. Are they right? How can Lot be called "righteous" and still do something so manifestly wrong?

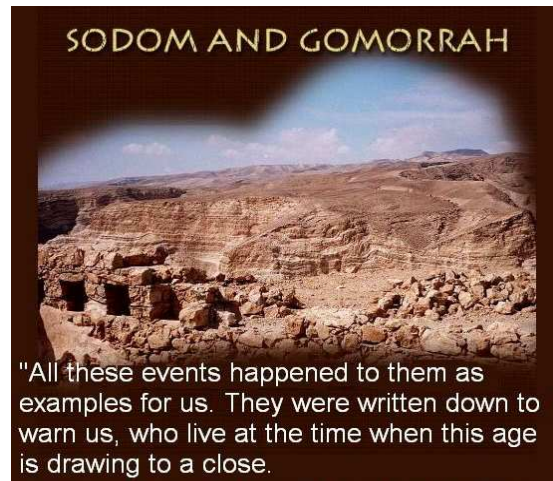
There isn't space here to develop the "curve" God uses to judge both people and nations. (Luke 12:48; Acts 17:30a) But I want to propose that it wasn't simply a matter of God giving grace to a moral midget living in a lawless land; cutting him a major break in the spiritual discernment and response category. Could Lot have been taking a desperate but reasonable risk to defuse the explosive situation and protect his guests, ones he might very well have begun to suspect were more than just mere human visitors?

I believe that is exactly the case.

Back to the scenario I have just described: Lot's daughters would have been known by some and perhaps many if not all of the men – young and old alike – that were in the crowd outside their home. And

certainly they were well-known, and deeply esteemed, by the two men who were betrothed to them. The crowd, again based upon the “color commentary” above, was mad with suspicion and fear. So what would have been the result of Lot’s “peace offering” of his two daughters? Their future husbands would certainly have sprung to action defending their honor. The townsfolk, seeing the two girls they knew from the marketplace, would have been loathe to allow them to be violated in this way. And, furthermore, Lot’s offer would have been proof of his good and peaceful intentions. The crowd would have likely dispersed and gone home and a horrible sin would have been averted. Lot would have won the day, making the best of a very, very difficult situation in a very dark and demonic culture. A (comparatively) righteous man indeed!

Well, we all know what happened next. The angels didn’t even give Lot’s potentially pyrrhic plan a chance to work. The tipping point had been reached and the only option left was to get out of Dodge. Sulphur rained down from heaven and the two twin cities were consumed in a fiery apocalypse. Judged. Condemned. And utterly destroyed.



Tying It All Together

So how does all this mesh together... and what lessons can we take away from it?

First, both Lot *and Sodom* are not to be as demonized as they so often are. It is too easy to make sinners – particularly when it is a sin that is very foreign and grotesque to us – as something completely *other* than ourselves; as trespassers to be looked down as so depraved that it makes our besetting sins look mild by comparison.⁸ And so *self-*

⁸ Exact percentages are impossible to know, but the best guess is that only 2% of the population struggle with same-sex attractions. This means that the vast majority of us intuitively view homosexuality as something exceptionally unnatural, strange and hence perverse. (Not to say that it isn’t. See my comments on page 14 & 15.) Given our sinful natures and the default mechanism of the fallen human heart to try and “earn heaven” by being good enough, we naturally trend towards establishing our relative “goodness” by contrasting ourselves with those who are “really bad.” (“Hey, I’ve never killed anyone!” the “I’m good enough to deserve heaven” person is so often heard to say.) So the sexual sins (fornication, pornography, adultery, etc.) too often engaged in by “straight” Christians seem not so bad in comparison to what the

righteousness takes root; a deadly sin that is akin to gross sexual perversion in the damage it can create as well as to the degree God hates it.

How many “Christians” in today’s church rail against, demean, reject or ignore homosexuals (sodomites) because they are just so “other” and perhaps deserving of the judgment that God reigned down on Sodom and Gomorrah?

The fact is that most of us in today’s church can find ourselves somewhere in the crowd that gathered around Lot’s house. No, we aren’t as bad as the *Übermensch* ring-leaders. Few are. But yes, we are too often willing to deny the truth and/or the cross we are called to carry because we want the exact same thing the townsfolk of Sodom wanted, what the late, great prophet to the 20th century, Francis Schaeffer identified as the twin idols that would be the end of western culture: *personal peace and affluence*.

Listen to what God, through the prophet Ezekiel, listed as the sins that triggered Sodom’s destruction:

"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." **Ezekiel 16:49-50**

Make no mistake about it; contrary to what “gay” apologists often argue, homosexual acts are alluded to here.⁹ The Hebrew word translated “detestable” (*tow`ebah*) refers to something that is morally disgusting. It is the exact same word used in Leviticus 18:22 in reference to homosexual acts (a man laying with a man as with a woman). Similarly, Jude 7 focuses on sexual perversion as a major reason for the cities’ destruction,

“...just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued

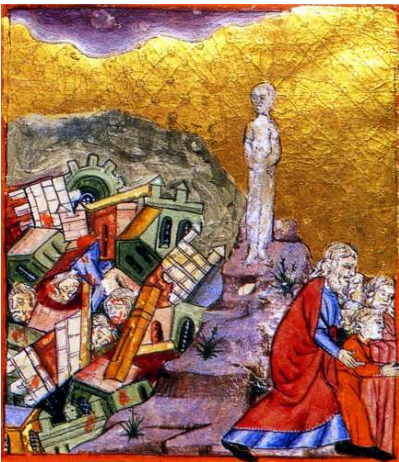
“sodomites” are up to. *Never underestimate the seductiveness, frequency and destructive power of this type of Pharisaical thinking.*

⁹ This is a favorite verse among “gay” theologians because it supposedly proves that the primary sins of Sodom had little or nothing to do with sexuality. The one mention of “detestable things” only refers to the intended rape of the two visitors, which would have just as bad regardless of the sexual orientation.

unnatural desire¹⁰, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire." **Jude 7**

With that said, however, it is clear from Ezekiel that homosexuality was far from the only sin of Sodom. And Ezekiel isn't alone. By reading the verses surrounding Deuteronomy 29:23; Isaiah 1:10 and 3:9; and Jeremiah 23:14 – among others – it is clear that God is just as concerned about idolatry, the shedding of innocent blood, haughtiness (pride), the oppression of the poor, religious hypocrisy, and other grievous sins. And Jesus Himself elevated a particular sin over all the collective sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, declaring that the people that fell into this transgression will fare worse on the great and final Day of Judgment than even these two infamous cities. (Matt. 10:5-15) The sin? *Rejecting the Gospel*.

In Conclusion



So what is "sodomy?" What is the sin that brought destruction on Sodom? As we've just seen, it was far more than just homosexuality. To single it out – the one sin that the vast majority of Christians are neither guilty of and do not struggle against – while ignoring the others that we do wrestle with and at times succumb to is at best a failure of humility and a lack of loving our neighbor as ourselves. And at worst it is pure and unadulterated Phariseeism.

It also provides a stumbling block – and a defense mechanism – for a sub-culture of sinners we are called to love and reach. Consider what Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, the San Francisco or New York City of the Greek world at the time:

¹⁰ "Gay" scholars have an answer for this verse as well: "sexual immorality" refers to things like rape and lustful, non-loving sexual relations between two people regardless of their sex. And "unnatural desire" can better be translated *other flesh* and the *other flesh* that they people of Sodom pursued was intercourse with angels. In response: 1. God, not man, defines "sexual immorality." And the Bible is clear that it defined as any and all sexual congress outside of a covenant marriage relationship between a man and a woman. (Gen. 1:27; 2:24; Matt. 19:5; among many other verses) 2. While we agree that *pursuing other flesh* is an acceptable translation of that portion of Jude 7 and furthermore that sexual relations with an angel, or more properly a demon, would qualify as an apt application of this condemnation, there is no evidence in Gen. 19 that the men of Sodom had any idea that Lot's guests were angels. The strange flesh they were pursuing was male-on-male intercourse.

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you.* But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**
(emphasis mine)

When we single out homosexuality as the one sin that brought judgment on Sodom and ignore all the other deadly sins that its citizens, like Corinth *and like us*, were and can be guilty of, we give homosexuals – people that we should be praying for and laboring to see washed and sanctified – grounds to question our integrity, humility and love. We give their apologists (and Satan) a club with which to hit us over the head and challenge our theological positions. We cause them to stumble. And instead of being like our father Abraham, crying out to God for their redemption, we become more like Lot and his wife and daughters¹¹: semi-comfortable and even complicit with many of the sins of an apostate culture but then raising our voice to single out the one thing we most detest for condemnation.

And that is why I think it is time for Christians to lead the way by rejecting the word “sodomy” as a synonym for homosexuality.

Closing Thoughts: An Important Word of Balance

Having said all this, allow me to close with a few final observations that provide some important nuance and context to what I have shared above.

First, I have been pretty direct, even forceful in addressing some of the sins and failures of today’s church in addressing both individual people as well as our culture’s struggle with issues surrounding same-sex attraction. But I don’t want anyone to misinterpret this admission and use it to paint all Christians with too broad a brush. Many today, particularly in the media and among homosexual activists, love to do

¹¹ Lot’s wife famously ignored the angels’ warning and looked back at the burning city and was turned into a pillar of salt. Clearly she longed for the comforts and seduction of the pagan city, much like the Israelites who would one day long to return to Egypt as they wandered in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. Similarly, Lot’s daughters later proved to have been well trained in the ways of Sodom. (Gen. 19:30-38)

this. The fact is that there are lots of sincere, God-fearing, loving and *inclusive*¹² people who are approaching this issue with a great deal of wisdom and compassion. As I have spent a great deal over the last two years working on a documentary film on the subject¹³ I have been privileged to meet and work with many of them.



Second, we live in a time of ubiquitous and potent idolatries. One of them, common in today's church, is trying to be "nicer than Jesus" – bowing and scraping before the idol of political-correctness, falling all over ourselves in an effort to not offend anyone. Humanists, moral relativists and materialists – people who are living proof of Malcom Muggeridge's observation that "Sex is the substitute religion of the 20th century" – have been tremendously successful in convincing our culture that "gay is good" and that any attempt to suggest otherwise is "homophobia" and as backward-thinking as condemning interracial marriage or the women's vote. As a result, all manner of churches and Christians are backing off from and even rejecting the Bible's clear condemnation of all sexual activity outside of marriage between a husband and a wife. Because of all this, some might be tempted to read into what I have shared here – particularly the admittedly rather surprising challenge that we stop using the word "sodomy" in its traditional sense – as a concession to the spirit of this age; that I am subtly backing off from a strong condemnation of homosexual activity.

I want to be very clear that nothing could be further from the truth. Sex between two men and two women is clearly and emphatically condemned in Scripture. I stand by that and make no apologies for it. *Let God be true and every man a liar.* (Rom. 3:4)

Furthermore, I think it very likely that the widespread acceptance of homosexuality and the tolerance of rape by the men of Sodom did provide a tipping point of sorts and forced God's hand in judgment. The simple fact is that idolatry always breeds more idolatry; a culture

¹² Jesus was famously a "friend of sinners" and so we should be. God's call to the lost, broken and hurting was and is "Whosoever will...come." The same should be our cry. The vital distinction that seems to be lost to many in our culture, however, is the second part of this love and call to the lost. As Jesus told the woman who was caught in the act of adultery, "Go and sin no more."

¹³ [Is Gay OK? Ten Things Every Christian Needs to Know](#), a primer on the subject that will, God willing and by His grace, be available soon.

that forgets God and His righteous commandments will inevitably descend into a matrix of pride, arrogance, haughtiness, hedonism, indifference to the poor and finally an obsession with sex that can only lead its citizens into deeper and deeper depravity. Welcome to America in the 21st century! Again the prophet Muggeridge:

“The orgasm has replaced the cross as the focus of longing and fulfillment.”

Lastly – and this is closely related to the previous point – there is also a tendency in today’s hyper-egalitarian culture to declare that all sins are the same: that sex between two men is no better or worse than stealing, or fornication between a teenage boy and girl, or – and this is something that I hear more and



more – lusting in one’s heart, a sin that probably 99% of all Christian men between the ages of fourteen and fifty (I’m going for alliteration here and not a precise time frame!) will commit at least once – or a thousand times – in their life. “We’re all sinners” the chorus goes, so let’s not make any distinctions. Instead just live and let live; be loving and accepting of one another and let God be the judge.

Well, it is true that all sins are the same in that the wages for every sin is death. (Rom. 6:23) I do deserve the same banishment from God’s perfect kingdom for lying or stealing as I would for murder.

Thank God for the great exchange made on the cross! (2 Cor. 5:21)

But at the same time, sins are very different in other ways. Stealing a candy bar isn’t going to traumatize people, a city or a nation as much as shooting a congresswoman, her aide and innocent bystanders at a townhall event in Tucson, Arizona. (The news report concerning this very event is playing in another room as I write this.) Neither do all sins reflect the same hardness of heart individually or the same level of apostasy collectively. The man who takes a second glance at an attractive woman’s figure in his office has indeed “fallen short of the glory.” But his heart is nowhere near in the same place as the person who spends hours trolling the internet looking at hardcore pornography. And was America a perfect, sinless society back when I grew up, when parents thought nothing of letting their kids roam the

neighborhood all afternoon playing? Of course not. But it sure was a better place – as least as far as sexual mores are concerned – than today’s America; when a twelve-year-old girl is raped, killed and buried in a landfill and the local news reports that there are over fifty registered sex-offenders living within twenty miles of her home!

The Apostle Paul further makes it very clear that sexual sins are in a category by themselves because they are a sin “against (one’s) own body” – the image of God in man. (1 Cor. 6:18-20) On top of that, there is a hierarchy concerning these “sins against one’s own body” implicit in the fact that the Law of God given to the Jews demanded lesser or greater sanctions depending on the specific sexual offense.¹⁴ And finally, there are some Jewish and Christian scholars who suggest that degrees of severity can also be found in the principle of *complementarianism*.¹⁵

Taking all these factors into account, adultery is worse than fornication; while sex between a mother and her son is worse than incest between siblings. But other than bestiality and rape¹⁶, there is no worse sexual sin than attempted intercourse between persons of the same gender.

So, while we need to be humble, loving, compassionate and righteously inclusive – reaching out to and seeking to win and help both individuals as well as a culture struggling with the complex issues surrounding same-sex attraction – we need to keep all of this within a rigorously Biblical context. This is very serious business here. We are already in the throes of God’s judgment. If we embrace, legitimize and finally celebrate this attempted negation of the image of God in man (Gen. 1:27) and the foundation of the family and human society (Gen. 2:23,24) it truly will be better for Sodom and Gomorrah than it will be for us on that Day.

¹⁴ It makes sense that if the Law commands a person be executed for committing adultery (sex with a person while married to another) or rape but simply either marry or pay a fine for fornication (consensual sex between two unmarried people), that the former sins are more serious than the latter.

¹⁵ “Complementarianism” is often simply understood to be the idea that men and women, while different, were designed by God to be equal, complimentary halves of a greater whole. Therefore they are of equal value and purpose in the economy of God. This is certainly true. But the principle, in this context, goes deeper than that; too deep to develop here.

¹⁶ There are some hyper-extreme perversions, like necrophilia, that are not specifically mentioned in the Bible – though they would be alluded to by other proscriptions concerning dead bodies or sanitation laws -- that God would no doubt view as equivalent abominations. There are some acts that are so rare and so unimaginably perverse that they don’t deserve mentioning.



Please feel free to respond to Eric and this article by writing to him [here](#). And if you are interested in better understanding homosexuality from a loving, compassionate, winsome and biblically faithful perspective make sure to check out ***Is Gay OK? Ten Things Every Christian Needs to Know*** when it is released. You can learn more about the documentary film – including how you can play a part in helping get it done – by clicking [here](#).