

completely rejected God and His way, therefore making it more difficult for one to repent and come back to God.

Those who practice homosexuality can be saved. We can see from the word of God that homosexuality is a sin, and a sin that is difficult for one to give up. But it is still possible for one who practices this to be saved. Paul told the Corinthians that "the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9). He then lists specific sins that will keep one from inheriting the kingdom. One of these sins is homosexuality. But Paul goes on to say, "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ

and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Some of the Christians in Corinth were former homosexuals. While it is a sin that is difficult for one to give up, it is possible for one to do so. So those who practice homosexuality can be saved, but they must first give up their sin. Repentance is necessary. So they are not without hope. But it will depend on what they choose to do.

Hate the Sin, Love the Sinner

There is a commonly used phrase: hate the sin but love the sinner. This phrase is not specifically stated in the Bible, but the principle is certainly taught. "And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some

have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh" (Jude 22-23). We are to hate the thing which defiles a man -- sin. But we are to be loving and merciful toward those who practice sin. We are to hate the sin of homosexuality. But we are still to love those who practice it. We should not treat these people any worse than others. Jesus died for them, just as He did for us (John 3:16). Salvation is open to them, just as it is to all (Titus 2:11).

Some will single out homosexuals and specifically target them for ridicule or even physical harm. Christians must have no part in this. We are to be good to all, showing a Christ-like example, and looking for opportunities to reach others with the gospel. ~

NAVARRE MESSENGER

The Growing Acceptance of Homosexuality

Andy Sochor

It was not that long ago in our society that homosexuality was a shameful practice that was mostly kept secret so that others would not know about it. Times have certainly changed. We've seen the transition from secrecy and shame to those who practice it parading and protesting in the streets, demanding that society recognize and accept same-sex marriages.

As we consider this practice, and the growing acceptance of it, it is important to be reminded of what the Bible teaches. In this article we will look at what has happened when homosexuality was widely practiced and/or accepted, as well as what the Bible has to say about the practice itself.

What We Should Expect as Acceptance Grows?

There are two times in the Bible where there was a broad acceptance of homosexuality and/or a high percentage of the population who practiced it -- Sodom in Genesis 19 and Gibeah in Judges 19. For the sake of space, I will not reproduce the full

texts here, but instead will provide a summary. But I encourage you to read those accounts in their entirety.

In Genesis 19, two angels came to Sodom. Lot, a righteous man (cf. 2 Peter 2:7), invited these angels (who came in the form of men) into his home. Later that night, the men of the city surrounded Lot's house and demanded that Lot send out the two men so that they might "have [sexual] relations with them," possibly rape them. Lot refused, instead offering his two daughters. The crowd would not accept them and instead became angry with Lot for "acting like a judge" over them. The angels rescued Lot from them, then told him of the coming destruction and warned Lot and his family to flee. After escaping, God destroyed the city.

The account in Judges 19 has several similarities with the record of Sodom. A Levite was traveling with his concubine and came to Gibeah, a city of the tribe of Benjamin. Having no place to stay, an old man invited them to his house for the night. That night, "certain worthless fellows" came and demanded the old man

deliver the Levite to them, that they might "have relations with him." Like Lot, this man refused and offered instead his daughter and the Levite's concubine. The men outside would not listen. For some reason (why, we're not told), the Levite sent out his concubine to the men. They proceeded to violently rape her throughout the night, so severely that she was dead in the morning. The Levite then issued a call to the other tribes to deal with this atrocity. The next chapter describes how the tribes came together, "united as one man," demanding that the tribe of Benjamin deliver the men guilty of this crime. Benjamin refused, a civil war broke out, and the tribe of Benjamin was all but wiped out.

As I said, there are many similarities in these accounts. One notable difference seems to be in the percentage of people engaged in this practice. Of course, numbers aren't given. But the implication is there that there was a higher concentration of those who practiced homosexuality in Sodom than in Gibeah. In Sodom, it was "all the people from every quarter" (Genesis 19:4). In Gibeah, it was "certain worthless fellows."

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But even if we could say that there were fewer in Gibeah who practiced this, we still know that it was widely accepted. We know that because the tribe of Benjamin, which included 26,000 men ready for battle (Judges 20:15), defended these men. Both of these accounts show situations in which homosexuality is widely accepted.

As we look at these accounts, what should we expect in our society as acceptance grows?

They will become more demanding.

As the practice becomes more accepted and homosexuals do not have to fear, they will become more demanding. In Sodom and in Gibeah, the men there demanded that the strangers be handed over to them so they could have sexual relations with them (Genesis 19:5; Judges 19:22). In our society, homosexuals are demanding that everyone recognize and accept their lifestyle. Not quite as severe maybe as the demands in Sodom and Gibeah, but perhaps a step towards that. Who is to say what the next demand would be?

They will become more intolerant.

With many calling for tolerance towards homosexuals, intolerance grows among them. They are intolerant of those who refuse to believe that their practice is acceptable and moral. They will not tolerate others "judging" them.

This was the problem Lot encountered. He pleaded with the men of the city to not do what they had planned to do. They

refused to tolerate Lot "acting like a judge" over them and turned against him (Genesis 19:7-9). This is common nature for many people. They tolerate the viewpoints of others unless the other believes they are doing something wrong. This will get worse as more people accept the practice.

They will become violent.

Thankfully, we have not seen much of this in our country. But I fear it is coming, especially in certain places. When their growing demands are not met, and as their intolerance builds, they will eventually become violent. This happened in Sodom when the men tried to harm Lot (Genesis 19:9). It happened in Gibeah when the men violently raped and killed the Levite's concubine (Judges 19:25-27).

This is where we are heading when society accepts the practice of homosexuality.

What Does the Bible Say about Homosexuality?

Seeing then what we can expect when homosexuality is widely practiced and/or accepted, let us also be reminded about what the Bible has to say about the practice itself.

It is a chosen practice.

Paul told the Corinthians of certain people who "will not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9). One of the practices he lists is homosexuality. Immediately following this list, Paul writes, "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were

justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Some of the Christians in Corinth had a background in homosexuality. But since coming to Christ, they gave up the practice. That was the choice they made. Many say that homosexuals are born that way. This has never been proven, but it is still affirmed. However, it cannot be true that certain people are born homosexuals, unable to decide how they will behave sexually.

First, we saw that there were Christians in Corinth who were former homosexuals. Second, homosexuality is a sin (more on this in the next point). Third, "God is not one to show partiality" (Acts 10:34). If homosexuality is a sin and people are born this way and cannot change, then God has made it so that certain people cannot be saved. He would be guilty of showing partiality. This cannot be true. God is just and impartial. We choose how we will act.

It is a sinful practice.

This is why Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. The Lord even told Abraham, before the angels visited Sodom, that He planned to destroy them because "their sin is exceedingly grave" (Genesis 18:20). Some have suggested that God did not destroy Sodom for the sin of homosexuality (which they believe is not a sin), but because they were inhospitable and wanting to do harm to the visitors to their city. Jude gives us the reason why Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed -- "just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way

as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 7). Notice there is no mention of a lack of hospitality or love for travelers. Their sin was in going after strange flesh and indulging in gross immorality. The sin that led God to destroy them was homosexuality.

Later, the Law of Moses defined homosexuality as sin (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13). Lot and the old man of Gibeah, one living before the Law and the other living during the time of the Law, both recognized homosexuality as being a wicked activity (Genesis 19:7; Judges 19:23). This practice is also condemned in the New Testament (Romans 1:26-27,32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 2:9-10).

One may wonder why I point out that homosexuality was called sinful under the Old Law. After all, we're not living under that Law anymore (Colossians 2:14), and the passages in the New Testament are sufficient to show the sinfulness of the practice. This is true. But looking at the Old Testament passages shows us a pattern. This behavior was never accepted by God. There was never a time where God looked favorably, or even apathetically, toward the practice.

Homosexuality puts one in a worse condition. By saying that, I do not mean that unrepentant homosexuals will suffer a worse punishment than those who practice other sins. All sins are equal when it comes to punishment and separation from God (James 2:10). But certain sins

can reflect a worse condition for the sinner. We can see an example of this by comparing Peter and Judas. Both Peter and Judas sinned during the time leading up to Jesus' crucifixion. Peter denied that he knew Jesus. Judas betrayed Jesus and turned Him over to be crucified. Peter was willing to die with Jesus (Matthew 26:35). But when the situation got difficult, he was weak and denied the Lord (Matthew 26:69-75). Judas' sin was premeditated. He plotted with the chief priests to deliver Jesus to them (Matthew 26:14-16). He planned to betray Christ, even as he ate with Him (John 13:26-30). He led the mob to Jesus so they could arrest Him, indicating to them the sign to identify the one to arrest (Matthew 26:47-50). Both men sinned. But Judas' sin indicated that he was in a worse condition, a condition from which it would be difficult to return.

Homosexuality is one sin that represents a worse condition. Paul explains this to the Romans. He spoke of those who refused to honor God (v. 21). As a result, they became arrogant, thinking they did not need God. "Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures" (v. 22-23). By rejecting God, "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (v. 25). Where does this mind set lead -- this attitude that one does not need God, will not honor God, and instead will invent their own "god" to serve? Paul goes on:

"For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error" (v. 26-27). Paul affirms that the practice of homosexuality indicates a complete rejection of God and His way.

Some may argue with that conclusion, even citing homosexuals in "Christian" denominations. But the ones Paul spoke of were religious (v. 24). They were just serving a different god. In the same way today, there are homosexuals who are religious, even those who claim to be Christians, but the God that they serve is one of their own invention. They serve a god who accepts their practice. This passage reminds us that it is not natural for one to practice homosexuality (v. 26-27). It is completely contrary to the way God made us. This could provide a possible explanation for why both Lot and the old man in Gibeah offered innocent women to the perverted mobs rather than give them the men they wanted (Genesis 19:8; Judges 19:24). In their minds, it would be worse to practice homosexuality than for these men to commit fornication with the women.

Again, sin is sin. Both are wrong. But the implication is that it is natural to think of homosexuality as being worse. In a way it is -- it indicates a condition of man in which he has