

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

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TO WHOM THIS MAY CONCERN:

This paper regards the issue of homosexuality from the point of view of the Christian Bible. On our website we have a Q&A section, and a few years ago a fellow named, Peet, asked this question. I give here my answer. A few years later I was writing my commentary of the Epistles of Peter, which give significant detail on the subject. Consequently, I inserted those few pages to expand on the issue. Those comments on gayness and love are found in the appendices at the end of the original paper. They are on pages 23-28.

QUESTION:

Please advise me of what the Bible says about homosexuality and lesbianism.

Peet

ANSWER:

Peet,

Wow! You are getting me in trouble again! The bulk of hate mail that I get is in response to my answer to this issue! But, here goes...

I think the best way to address this question is to give a contextual overview, an abstract of the biblical/Christian position, and then dive into the details of the arguments as outlined in the abstract. You can read just the abstract (summary position) if you wish, or plow through the following details.

The flow of this entire presentation is this: I will give the context; an abstract; biblical summary statement; rational arguments against homosexuality; homosexual point of view; various causes of homosexuality; biblical cause of homosexuality; biblical teaching about homosexuality; the problem confronting Christians; and a biblical response by Christians. Finally, I will summarize several conclusions and suggestive approaches, based on the material studied, on how to respond to various groups of people.

Context

By context, I mean how it is best for Christians to approach the question. Many have dear family members and friends who are gay. We all must work among gays in our communities.

Unfortunately, many gays believe that Christians hate gay people. Maybe some do, but that is not the biblical view, as I understand Scripture.

Let's see how God views the human race. Since we are all created in the image of God, we ought to reflect His attitudes. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

In another place Paul writes, "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:1, 8).

Paul reminds us again, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

According to these verses, the motivating factor for God to even deal with the human race in a redemptive manner is because of His love for us. Further, His grace (undeserved favor) was the only way he could save anyone. He did that by great sacrifice. He graciously moved out to the human race with an open hand.

Consequently, we Christians don't have a lot to brag about. Our right standing before God is because of Christ, not our own goodness. We need to be very careful in judging others. Our approach needs to be one of love, acceptance, courtesy, respect, humility, and kindness. God reached out to the human race with an open hand, and so should Christians. Christians can sincerely accept the gay person as a fellow traveler in this life, but also reject their lifestyle – which they should. But, Christians are not "hate mongers." Christians are simply being faithful and accurate to their understanding of the teachings of the Bible. Let me put it this way: if the Bible is wrong, then so are Christians.

Actually, I do not desire to start blasting at sins of all kinds. I would quickly run out of energy! I would rather look for solutions, mercy, grace, and humility – those qualities that bring glory to Christ, help and health to people and society. I want to pass on the grace of God, not His judgment.

At the same time, many Christians (and people) sincerely want to know what the Bible teaches about certain subjects. As a Bible teacher, I must be faithful to the Word, and my calling. And, I understand that the First Amendment of the United States Constitution permits me to write freely on this subject.

Abstract

The abstract just means a general summary statement of what follows. As I read the Bible, I understand it to teach that homosexuality and lesbianism is sin. That is the perspective of this

article, and the traditional Christian view. In the following, I present a biblical summary statement, explore several rational arguments that scholars use against homosexuality, explain the core of the homosexual's argument, examine several relevant biblical verses, and look at the problems confronting Christians.

Finally, I present a position on how to respectfully and effectively respond to those afflicted with this particular condition along with some summary conclusions.

The relevant biblical verses are Genesis 19:1-19; Genesis 13:13; Isaiah 3:9; Leviticus 18:22, 29; 20:13; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:10; 1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Peter 2:4-9; Jude 6, 7. You can read these verses and determine for yourself the answer to your question.

Again, to you the reader let me emphasize that I am simply giving the statements and traditional teachings of the Bible and the Christian Church – as well as some other sources such as reason and Muslim beliefs. I extend love and courtesy to you.

Biblical summary statement

1. The long time, traditional stand of Christianity and the Bible is that homosexuality is sin – it is dead wrong. The best way to state it is to quote the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2357:

“Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that ‘homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.’ They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.”

So, to those of you reading this article with anger, this is the official stand of the Roman Catholic Church, and traditional Protestant, Coptic or Orthodox churches would not disagree with the Catholic view. However, there are some cautions I will mention later.

In fact, I give to you here a quote of Camille Paglia. Ms. Paglia is a self-proclaimed atheist, libertarian, lesbian. She does not hold a view of the Bible that considers it to be the Divinely inspired word of God. But, at least she is intellectually honest – and very, very smart.

In an article in the Salon magazine (June 23, 1998) entitled, “I’ll take Religion over Gay Culture.” Paglia wrote, “So gays should quit bitching about Southern Baptists exercising their constitutional right to free speech about homosexuality, which is indeed condemned by the Bible, despite the tortuous casuistry of so many self-interested parties, including clerics.”

As to the teaching of the Southern Baptists that Ms. Paglia refers to, I took this statement from their official website,

“We affirm God's plan for marriage and sexual intimacy – one man, and one woman, for life. Homosexuality is not a "valid alternative lifestyle." The Bible condemns it as sin. It is not, however, unforgivable sin. The same redemption available to all sinners is available to homosexuals. They, too, may become new creations in Christ.”

Peet, to you I now get back to the explanation. And I start with some rational arguments that are offered in the free market place of ideas. Many of the arguments are weaker than others, but the cumulative weight of all of them together is very impressive to some people.

Rational arguments

2. There are several rational arguments that should be made regarding the wrongness of homosexuality – and I include both sides of the argument. I will introduce the arguments from design, the natural world, evolution, abnormality, slippery slope, culture, religion, views from the opposing side, and the causes of homosexuality along with the biblical view.

Design

First, the act is against the design of nature. Men and women are designed differently physically. That should be obvious. Internally we are different. Men cannot have babies, nor provide breast milk. Women need men to manufacture a baby. Our brains are different, and our hormonal distributions are different. Men and women are built to complement each other. It is physically natural and complementary for physical sexuality to be actualized between men and women – not between men and men or woman with women.

Natural world

Second, there is the argument from the natural world. By this it is meant from the animal world. The natural mating practices of over 99% of animal species are by sex between male and female. Sometimes it is argued that homosexual acts sometimes occur between two males of some species. But, that is either very unnatural, or a misrepresentation of the acts. For example, the action of mounting between two male dogs may be a sign of dominance, not sex.

However, to look at the animal world for examples on what is appropriate sexual behavior for people is extremely degrading to humans. It would be culturally and personally destructive for human society to adopt a “barnyard” sexual morality.

It can be summed up this way: homosexuality is legal in the United States and much of the world, but it is not natural.

Evolution

Third, there is the evolutionary argument. There are several fundamental ideas behind the process of evolution. The three I mention here are adaptation, perpetuation, and natural selection.

The basic evolutionary drive of any species is to adapt and survive in a particular environment, and to perpetuate their genes on to the next generation. For those genetically inferior members who poorly adapt or cannot adapt to the environment, natural selection picks them out of the herd and they fall by the wayside.

That way, the genes of the genetically superior members are passed on to the next generation to form a stronger more adaptive gene pool. Member traits that do not contribute, but actually detract or hinder success, to the welfare and perpetuation of a species are detrimental, and therefore eliminated.

So, the argument is this: in what possible way can homosexuality contribute to the adaptation and perpetuation of any species? Sex between two males or two females cannot produce any babies, let alone genetically improved babies, and therefore homosexual activity becomes an undesirable trait. It contributes nothing to the perpetuation or advancement of the human race. If evolutionary theory is correct, then homosexuality should be eliminated from the species – by natural selection.

Abnormal

Fourth, homosexuality is abnormal or not normal. According to scholar, Michael Medved, a new federal study discovered that only 1.4% of the American population is homosexual. This is from Medved's online article, "Serious Consequences for Believing False Numbers on Gays," By Michael Medved, 6/10/2011 (retrieved from http://townhall.com/tipsheet/michaelmedved/2011/06/10/serious_consequences_for_believing_false_numbers_on_gays).

The argument goes that since the normal for American sexuality is between male and female, and only 1.4% of the population is gay, then gay is abnormal. It is interesting that up to the 1970's, homosexuality was considered a psychological disorder by the psychological world. Political pressure forced a change in the classification of homosexuality as a disorder to be treated. It is, indeed, strange how such a small sector of society can exert such a powerful influence on the rest of society.

Slippery slope

Fifth, there is the slippery slope argument. Here the idea is that if homosexuality is considered normal, then that opens the floodgates for unlimited sexual activity between humans and whatever. Why not, for example, endorse polygamy? Why not embrace sex between adults and small children? How about people and goats or other animals? Where do you draw the line

between what is right and wrong? The answer: there is no standard to limit any type of sexual activity.

Culture/legal

Sixth, there is the cultural argument. It is true that homosexuality is present in all cultures and always has been. It is treated differently in various cultures. For example, some cultures tolerate the act, but consider homosexuals to be "different," and in some cases a different gender or sex altogether. They are given a special (but not elevated) status in their culture.

In other cultures, for example Muslim, the punishment is severe. According to Islamic scholar, Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, in his book, *Marriage and Morals in Islam* (Retrieved from http://www.al-islam.org/m_morals/chap3.htm), the following is found. He writes,

"So we see that as far as the Qur'an is concerned, homosexuality is an "indecency," and that Allah had destroyed a whole nation because of this indecent sexual behavior.

"In the Islamic legal system, homosexuality is a punishable crime against the laws of God. In the case of homosexuality between two males, the active partner is to be lashed a hundred times if he is unmarried and killed if he is married; whereas the passive partner is to be killed regardless of his marital status. In the case of two females (i.e., lesbianism), the sinners are to be lashed a hundred times if they are unmarried and stoned to death if they are married. (See the chapter on "hudud" in *Sharaya* and *Sharh Lum'a* also al-Khu'i, *Takmilah*, p. 42-44.)"

In the past century or so, the laws of the West have been liberalized regarding homosexuality. Concerning the United States, for example, in 1962 sodomy was a felony in every state, but by 2003 with the Supreme Court decision (*Lawrence vs. Texas*) all anti sodomy laws were outlawed. Worldwide, approximately 70 of 195 countries consider sodomy illegal.

In many cases, in the Western world, societies look to other cultures for examples of behavior. If they can find some example that justifies what they want to do, then it is accepted, or at least labeled an "appropriate lifestyle." The problem with this, however, is that just because a behavior can be found or committed somewhere in the world does not mean it is right. For example, one can find cases of mass murder, honor killings, or female circumcision, but that does not make mass murder, honor killings, or female circumcision right.

Religion

Seventh is the argument from religion. I have already given the stand of traditional Christianity as stated in the Catholic Catechism. But, let me return to our Muslim scholar, Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, and read his explanation, in addition to what I quoted above. He writes from the same source cited,

“All revealed religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam form a united front against such sexual behavior. It has been clearly condemned in the Bible and the Qur'an.

“The homosexuals are considered as the high risk group for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). This shows that nature has not accepted it as a normal sexual behavior among mankind. The homosexuals are told that in order to have safe sex, they must use condoms. If homosexuality without condoms is not safe sex, then how can it be natural? Isn't the statement that "it is natural but not safe" a contradiction in itself?

“The moral bankruptcy of the West is clearly evident in the present trend where some Christian churches are willing to consider modifying the Biblical moral values to accommodate the whims of those who want to justify their immoral behavior! A high ranking Anglican cleric in Canada says that it's time his church approved some form of service or rite that would bless the union of committed same sex couples. (See the statement of The Very Rev. Duncan Abraham. Dean of St. James Cathedral in Toronto. *The Toronto Sun*, Nov. 24, 1993.)

“After a three-hour debate in 1987, the General Synod of the Church of England ‘decided that homosexuality is wrong, but has refused to condemn it as a sin.’ (*The Globe & Mail* (Toronto) Nov. 12, 1987). It seems that instead of providing moral and ethical leadership, the church is being led by the special interest groups. Such groups even want the public schools to change the definition of family so as to make their life-style acceptable.”

These are somewhat harsh words, but they are words of fact on how Muslims view the Western world and homosexuality.

Here is another scientific study on the subject. The Marriage Law Project at the Catholic University of America in 2001 conducted research on the matter of major world religions on the question of marriage – specifically same sex marriages (retrieved from <http://marriagelaw.cua.edu/publications/religions.cfm>).

Admittedly, the subject is shifted from homosexuality itself to same-sex marriages. However, it certainly indicates that the five major world religions view homosexuality as wrong. In other words, if religion thought homosexuality was ok, then what would be wrong with same sex marriages?

In the study's introduction, it is stated,

“In the U.S. debate over the legal definition of marriage, clergy and believers can be found on both sides. Any brief review of popular articles or legislative testimony will make this clear.

“This fact could lead one to conclude that the major world religions are evenly-or at least deeply-divided on the question of whether marriage requires both a man and a woman. This is not the case. An examination of the official or historic teachings of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism reveals overwhelming support for the view of marriage as the union of men and women, and virtually no official endorsements of the idea of same-sex “marriage.” Representations to the contrary may reflect the views of particular individuals, or of interest groups within religions, but they do not represent the official views of these religions.

“The (bottom) line is that very few religious bodies have endorsed same-sex marriage, and those that have represent a very small fraction of believers in the world’s five major religions...To put this in more concrete terms...Worldwide, of 4,237,254,000 total adherents of the five religions, 4,232,732,599 are in religious bodies which affirm the classical definition of marriage (99.9 percent), and 4,521,401 are in religious bodies which support same-sex “marriage” (0.1 percent).”

By way of commentary, more and more of the liberal Christian groups are sanctioning homosexuality in an official manner.

The homosexual point of view

Eighth, I sum up here the major defense or argument from the “homosexuality is right” point of view. I want to be fair, because in the final analysis, I am not the one who decides what is good or bad behavior.

Sociologists who support homosexuality maintain that sexual orientation is a “social construct.” That is, every society decides what behavior is right or wrong, and treats any behavior that varies from those norms (or rules) as “deviant.” Those who are in power decide what deviant behavior is. They, in turn, stigmatize and/or punish the “deviant” behavior or person. Consequently, all rules that govern society are relative and not an absolute notion or reality.

Homosexuality, they say, is considered bad only since it does not conform to cultural expectations. Sexuality has a biological base, some say, but it is the social construction that makes it bad.

If, then, one concedes that sexual orientation is only a “social construct,” then it becomes fair game to appeal to other positive values, or social constructs, that would justify homosexuality.

Such values, for example, would be commitment, love, loyalty, pleasure, and the like. Homosexual relationships, the argument would go, reflect the more important social constructs of commitment, love and loyalty, and therefore trump any sexual orientation that might be involved in the relationship.

The basic problem with this view is the unproven assumption that absolute values and norms do not exist. God does not exist; consequently, there are no absolute values.

They would say that religion exists only as a way to enforce rules that govern society. Rules are more easily enforceable, the thinking goes, if the citizens think there is a god somewhere that made them up and will enforce them.

I must also say that some born again believers who are afflicted with homosexuality seek to justify their cause by appealing to arguments from the Bible. The arguments are deficient.

The cause

The ninth point I can bring up deals with the cause of homosexuality. It is very true that many are afflicted with a homosexual or lesbian orientation. Some say that it is a matter of sin, or moral weakness, others say it is a choice or something that is learned, and others say that it is biologically driven.

From a scientific, medical, or sociologically point of view, no one knows what causes homosexuality. There have been many studies made, but they are inconclusive at best and bogus propaganda at worst.

One avenue to understanding the condition is to explore where gender identity comes from. While it is true that the expression of our gender is greatly influenced by socialization, the base is found in the womb – in biology. Let me explain.

For the first few weeks of gestation, the male and female embryos look alike. Then a miracle happens. Genes from the Y chromosomes in the male triggers the development of testes, and not ovaries. Testes then generate generous amounts of hormones called androgens. These in turn began to develop the male physical characteristics. The female hormones, estrogens, begin to develop the female physical characteristics.

The dominant androgen is testosterone, which is linked to the aggressiveness of the male. At some point, massive amounts of testosterone flood the brain in a process called “masculinization.” It causes the brain to develop and organize in some different respects than in females. For example, the brain is divided into two separate hemispheres. They are connected by a mass of tissue and nerve fibers called the, “*corpus callosum*.” This connective bundle is up to 23% larger in women than men.

My point is that in the physical development of men and women, hormones and chromosomes could have gone haywire, and caused defects of some sort in sexual orientation and/or gender identity. In any case, if defective sexual orientation begins in the womb, it is still an abnormal fault, not a normal part of gender development.

It would be in the class of disorders such as possibly inherited bi-polar or schizophrenia disorders. If sexual orientation is distorted in the womb, then it is to be treated, not condoned and used as an excuse to justify behavior.

It is a similar issue with alcoholism. Some theorize that it is caused by a defect or certain conditions in parts of the brain. However, that does not give a pass to alcoholics to continue the self-destructive behavior. It is something to struggle against and treat.

I guess at this point I must make a further distinction. There is a difference between gender orientation and homosexuality. Gender orientation is the sense of one sex being imprisoned in the opposite body. Homosexuality is sexual attraction to the same sex – or sexual orientation. Those with gender disorders include those who seek sex change operations.

Bible's cause of homosexuality

What then does the Bible say about the cause of homosexuality? I think Jesus gives the best answer,

“And He was saying, ‘That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man” (Mark 7:20-23).

The point is that all mankind has a fallen nature that is bent toward violation of God's best for us. We all have a dark side that tends toward sin against God and others. This capacity for sin expresses itself in many different ways. People do not sin in every way they possibly can, but we have certain weaknesses that provide the avenue or channel for sin's expression. Homosexuality is only one expression of that sin nature.

For example, the Apostle Paul's evidently did not have a weakness for sexual temptation (1 Corinthians 7:8, 9). However, he had his weakness, which was coveting. He writes, “I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produce in me coveting of every kind” (Romans 7:7, 8).

This ends the section on rational explanations of which I examined the arguments from design, the natural world, evolution, abnormality, slippery slope, culture, religion, views from the opposing side, and the causes of homosexuality, including the Bible. From here I plunge into homosexuality as viewed by the Judeo-Christian Bible. Hang on. Some of it is difficult to accept, but it is what it is.

The Bible view of homosexuality

The material here I present by listing and discussing various Scriptural verses that relate to homosexuality. The gay community sometimes calls these the “clobber” verses. Well, actually, they do clobber, and they are very plain and clear to understand.

1. Clearly, the Bible condemns homosexuality and lesbianism. It is considered sin by any fair evaluation of Scripture. Let’s evaluate some key verses.

2. Genesis 19:1-19. This is the story of the two angels who came to Sodom and deliver Lot and his family from the forthcoming destruction. Lot invited them into his house and extended his hospitality. I pick up the story,

“Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; 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 relations with them.’

“But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, and said, ‘Please my brothers, do not act wickedly. Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof.’

“But they said, ‘Stand aside.’ Furthermore, they said, ‘This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them.’ So they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door” (Genesis 19:4-9).

First, I must identify what the act of wickedness was. Some scholars wrongly say it was the act of not being hospitable. From the text it obviously means homosexual relations. Lot offered his daughters who had not had relations with men. Sexuality is clearly in view. Lot was not saying, “Here, men, visit with and get acquainted with my daughters.” Further, Lot tried to restrain the men from a wicked act. Unfriendly hospitality would not be a wicked act!

Another popular view is that the men of the Sodom thought the visitors might be enemy spies, and that Lot was not capable of checking them out. Consequently, the men of Sodom wanted to bring out the visitors to interrogate them. Lot thought this would be “wicked” because ancient interrogations were brutal.

The problem with this view is that why would Lot want the men to “interrogate” his daughters that he offered? What information of suspected spying would that glean?

Another deficient view that I discuss later at the end of this paper is that gang rape was the wickedness.

The Hebrew word used for having relations is “*yada*.” It means to know by observation and thinking, or it can mean to know by personal intimate experience. The meaning is determined by grammar and context. It is used such by Moses in describing the sexual act between a man and woman, “Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain” (Genesis 4:1; cf. 4:9, 25). The word is used in Judges 19:20-25 where a similar event took place. There the wickedness involved rape, which is described as wickedness.

So, what was the sin of Sodom? It must have been bad, because Moses recorded, “Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly, and sinners against the Lord” (Genesis 13:13; cf. Isaiah 3:9).

The word “have relationships (i.e. *yada*)” depending on the context, usually means normal sexual relations between a male and woman. In Sodom it is used as the perversion of homosexuality, and the men of that city were notorious homosexuals. The key is that when “*yada*” has a personal direct object, it always has a sexual innuendo. That is the case here.

It is insightful to note the response of the homosexual community to any opposition. The tendency is to militantly impose their values upon those who disagree. That is exactly what the men of Sodom did to Lot, “This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them.”

Unfortunately, the goal of the militant homosexual agenda today is to destroy their opposition, and force their values upon the rest of the population.

As a final note, be reminded that the Koran’s understanding of this story identifies the sin of Sodom as homosexuality.

3. Leviticus 18:22-29; 20:13. This section gives a clearer explanation, and it also points to homosexuality being a common practice among the peoples of that land of Canaanites in which the Israelites dwelled. It reads,

“You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination. Also you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion. Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all of these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled. For the land has become defiled, therefore I have visited its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants” (Leviticus 18:22-25).

The other verse reads, “If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them” (Leviticus 20:13).

This is more very strong language, but it is from God – so it should grab our attention. God uses words like abomination, perversion, defilement, detestable, punishment, and death. Not only does He condemn homosexuality, but also bestiality. We now have, at least, God’s attitude about homosexuality. And, God makes the rules that we all will be accountable to someday – not me, you, scholars, activists, judges, politicians, special interest groups, Hollywood, university professors, or society.

We must remember, however, that this was the judicial code for Israel – a theocracy. It is not the legal code for America and most countries. As I have mentioned, in the United States (and other countries) anti sodomy laws have been erased. However, the making of laws in human legislative bodies does not mean that God has changed His mind.

4. Romans 1:24-27. This scripture reads,

“Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 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” (Romans 1:24-27).

It is instructive to read the entire chapter for greater context. But, from this plain explanation, it is clear that God condemns homosexuality and lesbianism. He uses words such as, impurity, dishonor, degrading, unnatural, indecent acts, and also the uncomfortable consequence: penalty.

5. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. These insightful verses expand on the issue of homosexuality, and put it into a larger context. It reads,

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

There is no place for ambiguity here. The Greek word “*arsenokoites*” is accurately translated as homosexual or sodomite in verse nine. The word “*malakos*” is translated effeminate, and is used to describe a person who allows himself to be sexuality abused. But, there are other important issues this portion of Scripture brings up.

First, homosexuality is stuffed in with a whole cluster of other sins. They are all bad. Consequently, it is wrong to isolate the one sin of homosexuality, and batter homosexuals to the exclusion of the other sins in this catalogue. Sure, homosexuality is sin and wrong, but so also is alcoholism, thieves, womanizers, and the con artists who greedily swindle people out of their money. This would include corporate interests such as the Enron scandal in America a few years back, or the corruption that engulfs governments.

It also condemns the sexually saturated culture of the West that glorifies virtually all sexual activity outside of the channels for which it was created by God.

However, the verses also cut the other way. Many now claim that homosexuality should be accepted and embraced in the Church as being normal sexual activity. They claim that it is ok to be a practicing homosexual or lesbian, and be a fully endorsed member of the Church, or even be in a pastoral leadership role.

How can this be? If it is ok to sanction homosexual behavior, then one is forced to accept as normal and Christian all the other practices in the catalogues of sin of which homosexuality is listed! This leads us to the land of the bizarre. Shall we say that womanizing, greed, or swindling is also proper Christian behavior? The answer is an obvious no.

Second, it gives hope in that people have a choice in the matter of, say, swindling someone or cheating on their spouse. Homosexuals also have a choice. Even if the temptation and strong desire is present, there is the choice of celibacy – or saying no. For example, men are sexually attracted to sexy beautiful women. But, they do not need to act out that attraction.

The other form of hope is that there is forgiveness for any and all sin through Jesus Christ. This includes homosexuality. Every one of those sins in this catalogue is forgiven because of Jesus Christ who paid the full penalty for all sin when He died upon the cross. The full, eternal pardon is applied to all who by faith receive Christ as their Savior. Verse 11 states that we are washed, justified and sanctified. Justified is a legal term that removes guilt and punishment. Sanctification means the forgiven sinner is set apart as a child of God. Washed means we are cleansed from the pollution of sin.

This is the present position of all who are saved through receiving Christ as their Savior. Legally, the cleansing and becoming perfect is our position now, but it will not be fully realized in our experience until we get to heaven. That means we will still have struggles with the old sin nature until we get to heaven.

6. 1 Timothy 1:9-11. This last Scripture section that I mention really puts the spotlight on sin – including homosexuality. It reads,

“Realizing the fact the law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, and immoral men and

homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted” (1 Timothy 1:9-11).

This section adds to the list of sins, and sure enough, homosexuality is contained in the list. I cannot add much more by way of commentary than I already have in the previous five verses. Consequently, from here I go to the cautions and suggestions that I mentioned in the beginning that deals with the biblical approach Christians might take toward anyone who commits any sin – including homosexuality.

For another presentation about homosexuality from the Bible, I will refer you to John MacArthur’s website article found at his Grace to You website (<http://www.gty.org>).

Problem confronting Christians

Christians discover themselves in a difficult situation. The radical, militant homosexual agenda in America powerfully attempts to force their beliefs upon society as a whole. They want Christians to shut up and bury their beliefs from the Bible, yet promote their homosexual agenda with complete freedom and immunity.

In some cases, they even pressure Christians to promote the gay agenda. If that position is fair, then it seems fair that those with homosexual views should also promote the traditional biblical agenda!

In many cases, the activist Gay agenda seek to make a mockery of Jesus Christ and the Bible while elevating their own beliefs. This is in keeping with how the men of Sodom opposed Lot and anyone else who opposed their views and practices.

Working and living in the secular world, one can lose their job, be sued, lose their business, mocked, lose votes, intimidated by Hollywood or the liberal media, charged with a hate crime, and destroyed (figuratively speaking), if they oppose the homosexual agenda. The oppression and persecution is real against Jesus Christ and His people are real.

Christians must oppose the forces of evil, but be wise and effective in how they do it. Speaking of the United States, homosexuality is legal. But, so is Christianity. The Constitution still protects freedom of speech and religion.

Jesus taught His disciples, “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). As a side bar, the context of this verse indicates that rejection of Jesus Christ is far worse than the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah!

Often Christians are accused of being “homophobic.” The idea is that they oppose homosexuality out of fear that turns into or is expressed as anger and hatred targeted against

homosexuals. Consequently, Christians become purveyors of hatred. If Christians are “homophobic,” then so is God.

Perhaps a better way to look at it is that homosexuals are perhaps “Christophobic.” They are fearful of Jesus Christ. More accurately, often the issue is the hatred of Christ. At least that is the impression Christ gave when He taught His disciples, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:18, 19).

The Lord Jesus Christ was even more direct when He said of those who reject Him and His teachings, “And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (John 3:19, 20; cf. John 1:1-5).

However, these are the words of Jesus Christ – not mine.

Finally, there is the very personal problem. Many Christians have family, neighbors, workmates, professional relationships, and friends who are gay. The problem becomes how to relate to them in a positive, loving, peaceful, humble way so as not to damage the relationship or surrender Christian values. We cannot tell a plumber not to fix our sink because they are gay. We cannot reject family and friends because they are gay. We cannot refuse to pay our mortgage because the banker is gay. We want to keep the relationship positive, yet not deny our own religious beliefs at the same time.

So, in view of the problem confronting Christians, how are we to respond? I turn to that next.

Biblical response by Christians

Based on the previous teachings from the Bible, the question arises, how are straight and/or Christian people to relate to homosexuals? This is a difficult issue, because the Christian is to extend understanding and love to all sinners, yet avoid sin. We are to love the sinner, yet avoid the sin. We are to live in the world, yet not be of the world (1 John 2:15-17).

I am aware that the saying, “love the sinner, but hate the sin” is very offensive to the homosexual culture. I suppose there are at least two reasons for this sense of offense. First, there are straight Christians who say it but don’t mean it. The issue is hypocrisy. The second reason may be that homosexuals just don’t like to be called sinners, because they don’t view homosexuality as sin.

But, the saying is biblical. Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John

3:16). God loves sinners, but hates sin. Since we are created in the image of God, it seems we should do the same as God.

I think the view of the Roman Catholic Church gives good summary advice in how to relate to homosexuality. I will break the issue down further later in this presentation. I quote again from their Catechism, section #2358, 2359:

“The number of men and women who have deep seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. They do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God’s will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord’s Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.

“Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.”

Some Protestants would have trouble with things such as, “sacramental grace,” but the general teaching is consistent with the Bible. Let me, however, explore the issues further.

Christians have been given by God the ministry of reconciliation, not condemnation. Paul wrote, “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). Hope, healing, and help through Jesus Christ should guide our actions.

Regarding the Christian, Paul states in another place, and I select a few phrases to illustrate my point,

“I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world...For what have I to do with judging outsiders...But those who are outside, God judges” (1 Corinthians 5:9, 10, 12, 13).

The context is that Paul was instructing Christians to judge themselves and clean up the corruption within their own ranks. The Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20) does not give us the mandate to go throughout the world, and with hatred seek out, condemn, and club every sinner we can find. No, we are commanded to go with love and promote, proclaim, and persuade all people to find forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration in Jesus Christ. Judgment is up to God. Proclamation is up to Christians.

Since homosexuals are in the workplace just like Christians, we must earnestly accept and kindly cooperate with them in regards to our duties. We should not treat them any differently that anyone else who needs Christ.

Paul also instructs us, “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person” (Colossians 4:5, 6).

We pray for wisdom. Paul wrote,

“With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:18-20).

We also exercise patience. Again, Paul wrote, “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2ff.).

As Christians, we are the salt and light of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16); therefore, we need to set the example for godly living, and where appropriate and possible, make decisions and conduct actions that foster a godly, healthy public environment. If we talk the walk, we need to walk the talk. We need a consistent prayer life, and understanding of God and His ways through the Bible. We must have our priorities correct in our own personal life. Our first and ultimate reliance is upon the Holy Spirit who empowers, teaches, and guides us in all matters.

Let me, however, explore these issues even deeper.

Conclusions - different groups and responses

Based on the teachings from the Bible that we have just examined, it seems to me that the following observations are fair, and consistent with the Bible. In light of our study, there appears to be several groups of people involved, and each group calls for a different response. Here they are. The responses are suggestive in nature. I realize that I do not have the final answer.

1. First, there is the committed and militant gay lobby that is stridently in the Christian’s face, and seeks to force their beliefs on society and Christianity. These would be like those men in Sodom, and also those who Paul spoke of who practice this “indecent” and, “give hearty approval to those who practice” the same things (Romans 1:32).

Here is what Christians are up against, “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (1 Corinthians 2:14). In other words, this group does not want to, and cannot change their mind.

This group cannot be persuaded away from their beliefs. It would seem appropriate to resist their vicious and harsh (or sometimes subtle) aggression by all legal, spiritual, political and rational means. It must be stated forcefully, however, that any form of Christian resistance must be nonviolent. Violent hate crimes have no place whatsoever in the Christian community, and are to be condemned.

This thought needs to be inserted. Christians do not oppose homosexuality because they want to impose their values on the homosexuals. Christians resist because they do not want to have destructive values imposed upon themselves. Values and lifestyles are not neutral. Values are not of equal importance and validity so that people are free to choose any values they wish and reap benign consequences. Lifestyles and values have distinct consequences. Some are good, and some are very destructive to society and people.

Yes, homosexuality is a harmful lifestyle. If it was healthy, then God would have put His stamp of approval on it – but He did not. He condemned it.

2. There are those who are genuinely Christian, but cannot escape the desires, and who have formed their own Christian groups such as the worldwide Metropolitan Community Church who openly welcomes gays and lesbians, and promotes same sex marriages. They do not see homosexuality as sin. They reconstruct the biblical verses in such a way as to end up endorsing homosexuality.

One of the problems genuine believers find in these churches is the emphasis on sexuality. These Christians just want a place to worship and try to grow spiritually. Of course, some straight Christians would question the legitimacy of the born again conversion of members of these groups.

How to respond? Frankly, I don't know. It is like a group of adulterers joining together and organizing something like the "International Church of Christian Adulterers." To go with the Romans passage, it would be like, "The Christian Church of Indecency" (Romans 1:27). It is an oxymoron. Where does one start the dialogue? Their central focus of justifying homosexuality by the Bible is an absurdity. Where is the common ground? Certainly one cannot surrender the biblical teaching to them. Certainly prayer, debate and dialogue wherever possible is appropriate.

3. A third group is the general non-Christian, non-militant homosexual community. They are a part of society, and are considered by many cultures as a third gender. I think a live-and-let-live approach is best. For the Christian, the first step is to seek to win them to Christ.

4. The fourth group consists of those genuine Christian believers who have homosexual urges and desires, wish they didn't have them, want to worship and serve Christ, but cannot find a place or niche in Bible believing churches. They are living with their unique temptations and struggles just like the rest of the Christian world who struggle with their own sins.

They should be accepted and welcomed in the church. Celibate homosexuals, who are walking with the Lord should have a place of service in the church – even as church leaders and even pastors.

The church welcomes couples who are living together, those with alcohol problems, pornography addiction, materialism and greed, bitter raging families, sour fault finding gossips, strident and stubborn troublemakers, and accommodates a host of other sins and temptations. The idea is to get all Christians under the teaching of the Bible, around mature Christians, and let the Holy Spirit work in their lives to bring about change. Why, then, exclude those with homosexual proclivities? Does not the grace of God extend to homosexuals as abundantly as to anyone else?

Who among us does not struggle with their own sin nature? And, who among Christian leaders does not struggle with their own personal temptations? I guarantee this: if every preacher was measured against the Sermon on the Mount, all would be disqualified and fired.

Was it not the great Apostle Paul who said, “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all” (1 Timothy 1:15)?

Without compromising Biblical principles and convictions, grace (underserved favor) should carve out a huge swath in the Christian church. If we all received from God what we deserved, we would all be condemned. It is by grace that we are saved and it by grace that we live our life.

I know of one seminary president who says, “Every morning I ask God not to give me what I deserve, but rather, extend grace, mercy and forgiveness to me – and I will pass it on to others.”

One problem of the Evangelical church is that they do not realize the enormous power and need for grace, nor the dreadful extent and depth of our own sinful depravity. When we measure ourselves against the holiness and requirements of our holy and just God we fall woefully short. Our need for grace is desperate.

5. The fifth group of the homosexual world seeks to change the theology of the traditional denominations of Christianity. Homosexuality and same sex marriages have been debated for years in many mainstream denominations. Even in the huge Anglican Church, the issue is hotly debated. In these instances, however, the issue is more on the source of authority for theology rather than anything else.

Liberal theology is the culprit in this case, and at the heart of liberal theology is the denial of the absolute integrity, inspiration and authority of the Bible. If one rejects the Bible, then it

becomes subordinate to the popular and current values of society. In other words, the values of society become the values of the church – not the teachings of Holy Scripture.

One must resist the tendency to depart from the Bible within the church.

6. The last group consists of the parents and family who have homosexual or lesbian children or relatives. They carry a huge burden. Sometimes they are terribly and wrongfully accused of turning their children into homosexuals by the way they raised them. This is a naïve and cruel accusation to inflict upon parents. Children are responsible for their own sins. Let me put it another way: parents are not responsible for the sins of their children – whatever that sin might be.

In our court system, for example, if someone commits a crime, the one who committed the crime goes to prison. The parent of the criminal does not go to prison. God is much fairer than our human legal system. The fact is that no one knows what causes homosexuality. There could be many causes, and there probably are many. Remember, however, the ultimate cause is the corrupted sin nature of humanity.

In some cases, Christians pressure parents to reject their own gay offspring. How can this be? Parents turn against their own children? If family relationships are severed, how can the parent possible bridge the gap and help their own? Does God ever turn His back and give up on any of His children when they sin? Never! Did the father of the prodigal son reject his own flesh and blood? Never! His arms were always open to receive his wayward son (Luke 15:11-32).

The prodigal son wasted and squandered his inheritance in wild and loose living. You can bet there was sexual immorality involved. His was a life of “much wine, wild women, and bawdy song” until his money ran out. However, the father’s grace, forgiveness and love for his son never wavered. In fact, the parable should be renamed the “gracious father,” and not the “prodigal son.” The grace of the father is the main point of the parable.

I give another example from my own life. I knew a great Christian leader who is a legend in some circles. God used him mightily. However, he had some sons who in their youth did not walk anywhere close to God. Some even ended up in jail for a time.

This man was a pastor of a large church, and he received tremendous pressure because of his son’s behavior. He told me of the sadness he experienced when he visited his son in jail. But, he loved his son, and didn’t give up on him. His advice was, “Never give up on your children, no matter what grief they may cause you.” He was like the father of the prodigal son. Eventually, those wayward sons went into the ministry or supported the ministry.

7. The final response that I strongly urge is prayer, and accessing our spiritual resources. This is our first, best and constant place to go for wisdom, strength, strategic instruction, and protection.

Paul warned us,

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm” (Ephesians 6:12, 13).

There is the harsh reality of spiritual warfare raging behind the scenes. The demonic forces are many, and are strategically arranged and empowered to destroy the human race. Satan does not love us. He hates us. He works behind the scenes, and through the agency of humans, organizations, and even sometimes governments.

An example of the latter is the tyrannical government of Iran who seeks the wholesale slaughter and obliteration of the nation of Israel. Other examples include the brutal reign of Hitler, Stalin, and Mao Zedong. Tens of millions (probably well over 100 million) of people were murdered under their rule. There had to be a demonic force behind that evil.

Saint Peter wrote,

“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world, and after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you” (1 Peter 8-10).

Finally, let me close out this essay by this positive slant. There is forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration for all who have committed any sin, whether it is a Christian or non-Christian. Everyone is afflicted by the disease that the Bible calls sin. Although Christians must recognize the reality and destruction of sin, our focus is to be on God’s solutions. As I stated, our reliance must be upon God, because we are up against dark, hate inspired spiritual forces (Ephesians 6:12).

Paul writes,

“For while we were still helpless; at the right time Christ died for the ungodly...But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans6, 8-10).

The safe and sane approach to this issue of homosexuality and lesbianism (or any sin) is to run – no, sprint - to Christ for forgiveness and restoration! It is not wise to remain an enemy of God. And for the Christian, they should through persistence, love, prayer, acceptance and respect, seek to turn all sinners to Christ, and the Way of Christ – and to honor by word and deed the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

With this rather extended answer, Peet, I come to the end of our journey regarding the question of what the Bible teaches about homosexuality and lesbianism. I hope this helps.

The flow of this entire presentation was this: I gave the context; an abstract; biblical summary statement; rational arguments against homosexuality; homosexual point of view; various causes of homosexuality; biblical cause of homosexuality; biblical teaching about homosexuality; the problem confronting Christians; and a biblical response by Christians. Finally, I summarized several conclusions and suggestive approaches, based on the material studied, on how to respond to various groups of people.

All the best, and God bless...and, please tell others of this website.

Dr. Newman

APPENDIX ONE: PETER ON HOMOSEXUALITY

2015

Since I wrote the above article some years ago, I have done more exegesis on one or two important sections of Scripture regarding homosexuality. Below, I add my commentary of 2 Peter 2:1ff. It is taken from my book, *“How to Live in an Upside Down World – Words from Saint Peter.”*

“(2 Peter 2:1) But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bring swift destruction upon themselves. (2) And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; (3) and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”

Evil of homosexuality

5. There are two motives that describe the immoral character of these teachers of falsehood listed in verses two and three: sexual immorality and greed. There are other motives that drive teachers of falsehood regarding Christ, but these two appear here. Peter writes, “And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned” (2:2).

False doctrine and immoral living or practice goes together. Sensuality (*aselgeia*) means unrestrained living or lifestyles, and especially as it refers to sexual conduct. It refers to

different forms of or repeated acts of sexual immoral practices. Sometimes it is translated as licentiousness.

Peter uses the word a few verses later in referring to Lot, “and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual (*aselgeia*) conduct of unprincipled men” (2:7). The reference is to the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah, which Peter also identifies in verse six.

What we have here is something overwhelming the western world today, and particularly the United States. As I write this, the Supreme Court of the United States is debating the issue of same sex marriage. Homosexuality was the grievous sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, and it is the sin being militantly foisted and imposed upon much of the world. Homosexuality is tearing at the churches as aggressive, vicious, and hostile gay agendas are ripping churches apart.

The rapid descent of morality is astonishing. Homosexuality, which is a grievous sin, is accepted as normal, and now the descent surrounds the issue of same sex marriages. I recall that years ago the great evangelist, Billy Graham, preached that if God did not bring judgment on the United States, He would have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.

An example of this decadent morality is seen in the foreign aid of developed countries. Much of the foreign aid given to developing countries by Western aid agencies is tied to those countries being forced to accept homosexuality and same sex marriages. Peter directly links the teaching and teachers of destructive falsehoods about Christ to those who practice and promote homosexuality. Their end is judgment and punishment at the hands of God.

One principle of Bible interpretation is to consider the writer of Scripture, his intent, the need of the hearers, and the cultural and historical context. The aim is to discover that principle that is universal in nature and is applied to any culture at any time of history. The principle is then directly applicable to the time and culture in which we live. Peter tells us that the sinfulness of homosexuality is one of those universal sins. He does this by his reference to Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6). God’s judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah was some 2000 years before Peter during the time of Abraham. Consequently, we observe that homosexuality is a common practice of humanity, but also a sin against God and always has been.

“(2 Peter 2:4) For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; (5)and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the un-godly; (6) and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter; (7) and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (8) (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds), (9) then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,”

Sodom and Gomorrah

4. Peter also presents a third example of the certainty of God's judgment on sin: the condemnation and destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Again, Peter assumes the reality of the Genesis story of those two cities. The great sin of those cities was homosexuality. God revealed to Moses that it was a sin in Abraham's day, Moses' day, and in the days of the early church. Abraham was the son of Terah who descended from Noah's son, Shem (Genesis 11:27). He was born over 2,000 years before Christ. For the last 4,000 years, as recorded in Scripture, homosexuality has been in existence and considered as sin.

In the times we live, the forces behind homosexual activity and same sex marriage are powerful forces arrayed against Christ and His Church. There are those who defend these sins. A most popular explanation regarding Sodom and Gomorrah is that the sin of those people was actually inhospitality to strangers. The story is found in Genesis 18:1-19:38.

I must make a disclaimer. Everyone sins: even Christians. Hypocrisy abounds throughout the world. You sin. I sin. Christians do not, or should not, become judges over non-believers – or even pretend they are above sin. What I do here is simply explain what Peter and the Bible says about this sin of homosexuality. This word is from God, because He is the author of the Bible. We Christians must stand in awe and fear of the Lord in view of His judgment on sin.

It is a fact, however, that God is the judge of sin. He has made the rules. To stand in judgment of God is a frightening thing to do – and that is what the defenders of sin do: stand in judgment over God. Those who promote homosexuality, or any sin, are in opposition to God. That is a scary place to be. The difference is that Christians have been forgiven of their sin through Christ.

The key verses to consider that define the sin of the men of Sodom read, "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 relations** with them.' But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, and said, 'Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly. Now behold, I have two daughters who have not **had relations** with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof'" (Genesis 19:5-8, emphasis mine; cf. Isaiah 3:9).

There are four factors to consider. First, it seems as though the men of Sodom were very friendly. Second, the Hebrew term for "have relations" is the same in reference to the desired action by the men of Sodom, and the offer of Lot's daughters. Lot was clearly offering the sexual favors of his daughters to placate the men's sinful desires for the angels – who appeared as men. Third, cities in the Old Testament days were not destroyed for being unfriendly. Fourth, Peter labeled this sin as, "ungodly, lawless, unprincipled, and under punishment" (2:6-9). Fifth, Jude identifies the sin as a form of gross sexual immorality (Jude 6, 7).

The word for “had relations” (**to know**) is the word normally used for sexual intercourse. Moses records, “now the man had relations (know) with his wife Eve and she conceived and gave birth” emphasis mine (Genesis 4:1).

The actual Hebrew word used is “yada.” Whenever this word has a “personal direct object (i.e., to know someone), it always has a sexual innuendo” According to John H. Walton (Ed.). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary.*”

There is another place in Scripture where the same construction is used explaining what was the act the sodomites wanted.

“While they were making merry, behold, the men of the city, certain worthless fellows surrounded the house, pounding the door; and they spoke to the owner of the house, the old man, saying, ‘Bring out the man who came into you house that we **have relations** with him.’ Then the man, the owner of the house, went out to them and said to them, ‘No my fellows, please do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house, do not commit this act of folly” emphasis (Judges 19:22, 23).

I think it is useful to address another argument the defenders of homosexuality use. They say that the sin in the case of the Sodomites was “gang rape.” In other words, the sexual act itself is ok, but to gang up and take turns on a hapless victim is wrong.

Major problems arise from this interpretation. First, consider when Abraham and Lot separated and went different ways concerning their economic interests. Lot chose the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom. Then it is told, “Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord” (Genesis 13:13). Consequently, the Sodomites were considered “wicked” before the attempted, “gang rape.”

Second, consider when the angels visited Abraham, then left on their way to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. God Himself said, “The **outcry** of Sodom and Gomorrah is **indeed great**, and their sin is **exceedingly grave**. I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know” (Genesis 18:20, 21 – emphasis mine).

This was also before the incident of “gang rape.” The word for “outcry” denotes a cry arising from pain and sorrow, imploring help, or justice. In this case it is a cry to Heaven for vengeance or punishment on account of an outrageous sin that demanded an enquiry. According to one commentary, the idea is, “I shall examine fully whether the corruption of the people is as universal and hopeless as rumour says: in that case they must be exterminated; otherwise, I shall inflict a mitigated punishment” (Jamieson, Robert, Fausset, A.R., Brown, David. (Reprint) *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publish Company, 1978).

This language is expressed in anthropomorphic style, or after the manner of men. God knew all along what was happening. Keil and Delitzsch concur. (Keil, C.F., Delitzsch, F. *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.). God decided to exterminate. The exceedingly grave sin was a pattern of life for the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. As a final note, even Abraham identified the sin of Sodom as “wicked” (Genesis 18:23, 25).

To take another approach, the response of Abraham who was actually talking with Jehovah was enlightening. He admitted the guilt and wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. However, he sincerely and earnestly prayed for the deliverance of the area. He knew the justice and judgment of God was front and center; however, Abraham out of love and concern even for the wicked, appealed to the grace of God for their deliverance. This is instructive for believers. We must pray much for those outside of Christ. God has already condemned them. We must pray for their salvation.

It is of note that the fierce and aggressive militancy of the homosexual agenda against Christ in this day draws a parallel to the hostility of the men of Sodom. Lot was called “righteous,” and that seems strange in light of his offering of his daughters. However, the custom of that day was to protect his guests at all costs. Finally, the destruction of those cities serves as an example of God’s attitude toward the sin of homosexuality. The place where those thriving but sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were located is now barren, full of tar pits, mounds of asphalt, and marshland.

Another somewhat frightening issue is this. As I write this, Ireland has officially declared same sex marriage as legal. The citizens of that country are very happy. If, however, one was to tell them that what they did was very evil in the eyes of God, they would laugh and mock. The sobering reality is this: if God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, certainly He will bring judgment upon that country. America could be close behind. The only reason God tarries is that in His patience, He is waiting for more people to come to Christ and be saved (cf. 3:15).

Lot’s decision: good or bad

5. There is another practical matter of note. Did Lot make an immoral decision to offer his virgin daughters to the men of Sodom to gang rape in order to protect the angels (appearing as men) who were his guests? God called Lot righteous three times. Yet, this decision he made was terrible. Before we condemn Lot, it is important to understand that in life we are sometimes forced to make a choice of which both or all choices are bad. This was the predicament that Lot found himself. He was in a chaotic situation, and had to make a quick decision. In such an event, I would suggest that we render our decisions based on the best of two or more bad choices. In other words, which choice will cause the least damage to all concerned?

I give an example. One time a woman wrote me with her problem. She had just become a Christian, but was in a polygamous marriage with several children that were hers. She asked if she should leave her husband. If she left her husband, her parents would not want her back, according to the cultural customs. Her children would be rejected by society. Probably the only

way she could feed herself and her children would be to prostitute herself on the street. She had to make a decision of which both choices were wrong. God orders a monogamous marriage, but she would be forced into prostitution if she left her husband. What would you advise her to do?

We should not be too quick to condemn people if they make choices in life that are not perfect. Remember, in the choice that Lot made, He was still considered righteous by God. He was not righteous because of his decision, but because Christ paid the penalty for all sin in the life of Lot – just as He does for today’s believers.

God’s rescue

6. We now see the promise of ultimate deliverance to the people of God in verses seven through nine. Peter again mentions Lot, describing him as a righteous man. Peter also fills in more information about the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah as the “unprincipled...lawless...unrighteous” men. They were lawless because they had violated the laws of nature and conscience. The Mosaic Law had not yet been given.

As to Lot, he was rescued from judgment, and his conscience was tormented by the temptations around him. Not that he was inclined toward homosexuality, but that living in an environment of evil caused him distress. Christians living today are in an environment that hates Christ, and indulges in sin. Whenever we turn on the TV, read the newspaper, attend secular universities, we are pressured to keep quiet and adopt the ways of the world. Our souls are bothered and agitated.

The solid promise of God is that all believers in Christ will be rescued, and the ungodly will come under punishment. God knows how to rescue believers, and He has the power, motivation, and skill to deliver on His promise. If He can cast demons into hell, flood the world but save eight people, and destroy cities, then He can and will deliver those who belong to Him.

APPENDIX TWO: LOVE

This portion is from another section from my book that deals with the issue of love. The argument is made by those of the homosexual world that God’s basis attribute is love, and that since God loves us, He would not punish sin.

A final issue is the view that the fundamental attribute of God’s character. It is believed that He is a God of Love. That is very true. Love, however, is always grounded in a deeper attribute of His character: His holiness or justice (cf. Isaiah 6:1-5). The Psalmist wrote, “Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne” (Psalm 92:2).

Generally, love is said to mean God would not send people to Hell, but He will let them do as they please and never punish people. However, love is not a sentimental “Go ahead and do as

you wish, because God loves you and wants you to be happy. Don't worry, He will not judge or punish you."

To illustrate, when my children were very young, we lived by a busy highway. My little son kept begging me to let him go play in the highway with the big cars. Obviously, I said, "No, you will be killed or badly injured. My act of love was to restrain my son from doing that which would hurt him, even though he threw a tantrum because he did not get his way.

Holiness or justice is a set of rules or laws that define good and bad. Good things are good for people. Bad things are bad for people. Love is directing others toward that which is good, not bad. It would not be love for me to tell someone to go pick up a six foot rattle snake by the head. Love must be based on what is just and right, and what is in the best interests of the one loved. That is the kind of love God has for us.