

## GENESIS 18:20, 21; 19:1-17 THE SODOMITE IS NOT GAY

“The LORD said, ‘Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know.’

“The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth and said, ‘My lords, please turn aside to your servant’s house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way.’ They said, ‘No; we will spend the night in the town square.’ But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

“But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.’ Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, ‘I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. 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.’ But they said, ‘Stand back!’ And they said, ‘This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.’ Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door down. But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door. And they struck with blindness the men who were at the entrance of the house, both small and great, so that they wore themselves out groping for the door.

“Then the men said to Lot, ‘Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it.’ So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, ‘Up! Get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city.’ But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

“As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, ‘Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.’ But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. And as they brought them out, one said, ‘Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away.’”<sup>1</sup>

“**G**ay.” This is a word whose meaning likely will never be recovered in our lifetime. Only within the past several decades has the word been transformed from one meaning to another. The root of the word can be traced to the Old High German in the 12th Century. Its root meant “sudden or fast.” In the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, the word had evolved to mean “merry” or “lively” in the Old French tongue.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible, English Standard Version**, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> “Gay,” dictionary.com (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/gay>), accessed 10 July 2009

It is interesting to note that the word has had a sexual connotation since at least the 17<sup>th</sup> Century when a “gay” woman was a prostitute and a “gay” man a womaniser. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the word began to be used by homosexuals when they referred to themselves. In a master's dissertation by Ken Cage at Rand Afrikaans University, he writes, “gay people throughout the Western world have, for a long time, used a secret form of language to communicate among themselves.”<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, the term, “gay,” became common within the homosexual community, used by homosexuals to refer to themselves long before the word came into common usage in that context. In 1938, a very public use of the word occurred in a movie starring Cary Grant. In this movie he was dressed in a woman's lace nightgown. He was asked if he always dressed this way. His reply was, “No, I've just gone gay all of a sudden.” In 1941, the term “gay” was used as a slang term for a homosexual in a book entitled, “Sexual Variations.” In 1969, New York City police raided a bar at Greenwich Village that was frequented by homosexuals. As result of that ordeal and the ensuing protests, the word, “gay,” took on its modern usage in our world.<sup>4</sup>

There is increasing pressure to normalise what has been seen as abnormal throughout history; the transformation of word meanings is but one evidence of this transformation. No Christian should be surprised at this effort. When Paul had catalogued the long list of sins that reveal the downward march of a terminal society, he concluded that list with this statement, “Since they didn't bother to acknowledge God, God quit bothering them and let them run loose. And then all hell broke loose: rampant evil, grabbing and grasping, vicious backstabbing. They made life hell on earth with their envy, wanton killing, bickering, and cheating. Look at them: mean-spirited, venomous, fork-tongued God-bashers. Bullies, swaggerers, insufferable windbags! They keep inventing new ways of wrecking lives. They ditch their parents when they get in the way. Stupid, slimy, cruel, cold-blooded. And it's not as if they don't know better. They know perfectly well they're spitting in God's face. And they don't care—worse, they hand out prizes to those who do the worst things best” [ROMANS 1:28-32]!<sup>5</sup>

Let me say at the outset that anyone who justifies acts of violence or abusive language because they disagree with or are angered by behaviour will find no comfort in the Word of God. God does not condone gratuitous violence against sinners. He is the Judge—you and I are unqualified to judge the hearts and motives of any individual, much less judge our own actions and attitudes. Having said that, it is equally wrong for those who advocate for homosexuality to employ abusive language against or to seek to harm those who do not agree with their lifestyle choice or the agenda that they are even now imposing on western society.

However, we must not permit ourselves either to ignore sinful behaviour or to justify cowardice through silence. Amos has spoken for all who would conscientiously follow the LORD God when he wrote:

“The lion has roared;  
who will not fear?  
The Lord GOD has spoken;  
who can but prophesy?”

[AMOS 3:8]

<sup>3</sup> Ken Cage, cited by Ronnie Floyd, “First-Person: ‘A biblical response to unholy gay “matrimony”””, Baptist Press, September 19, 2003 (<http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=16715>), accessed 10 July 2009

<sup>4</sup> Ronnie Floyd, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, **The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language** (NavPress, Colorado Springs, CO 2002)

When God has spoken, those who fear Him must speak; and it is quite clear from even a casual perusal of the Word of God that He condemns sin. The Lord is pledged to judge all sin. Therefore, when we speak out to warn of that divine judgement, we are showing compassion for and mercy toward sinners. Christians who speak out against sinful behaviour do not seek to hurt, but rather to bless. They have no desire to condemn; rather they seek to deliver from judgement. In that spirit of compassion and concern, I now point us to the Word of God.

**HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOUR IS SINFUL** — “The LORD said, ‘Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know.’” Sodom, together with her twin city of Gomorrah, was a wicked city. Indeed, the inhabitants were condemned as being arrogant and self-centred; and though surfeited with food and with excessive leisure, the people was utterly unconcerned for the poor and needy [EZEKIEL 16:49]. Nevertheless, it is the “sexual immorality and [pursuit of] unnatural desire” [JUDE 7] that brought about the destruction of the cities of the valley.

Male homosexuals are identified as “Sodomites,” after the actions exhibited by the people of Sodom toward the angels sent to assess the behaviour of the inhabitants of the city. Thus, the term “Sodomites” describes the behaviour of individuals who act out homosexual desires. People argue over semantics, contending that homosexual desires should not condemn anyone. The thought is that a person cannot help feeling what they feel. Let me say at the outset of the message that God does not condemn anyone for his or her feelings—so long as illicit desires are not entertained. You will recall that the tenth commandment condemns greed, or entertaining desire to possess what another possesses. “You shall not covet your neighbour’s house; you shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour’s” [EXODUS 20:17]. Until one begins to dwell on what another has, awareness is not sinful. When one entertains greed, focusing on what another has or what the thinker does not have, that individual has passed from awareness to sin.

Similarly, feelings toward another of the same sex are not sinful in themselves, provided one does not entertain sinful desire, focusing on behaviour that is clearly condemned by God. Make no mistake—homosexual acts are condemned by God. One cannot get around the clear statement that widespread approval of homosexual acts is a mark of God’s dismissal for society. The passage is extended, but it will be beneficial for us to establish the biblical view of homosexual behaviour by referring to the divine assessment given in the first chapter of Romans.

“The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

“Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about 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 up to dishonourable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

“And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them” [ROMANS 1:18-32].

There are a variety of texts that explicitly condemn homosexual activity. For instance, “We know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine” [1 TIMOTHY 1:8-10].

Or yet again, “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” [1 CORINTHIANS 6:9, 10].<sup>6</sup>

Beyond these explicit biblical statements identifying homosexual activity as sinful, there are a number of passages that implicitly expose homosexuality as sinful and condemned.<sup>7</sup> It is appropriate to note that sin is condemned in these lists, and that homosexual activity is specifically named—it is not named first, it is given no special place in the list of sins; however, homosexuality is identified as sinful behaviour. It is necessary to take a moment to say that though homosexuality is a sin, it does not condemn an individual more than any other sin. Clearly, some acts that are commonly condoned, even among professing Christians, are exposed as sinful in the sight of the Lord in these passages—idolatry, greed, drunkenness, reviling, swindling, perjury, and sexual immorality among other sinful activities. Nevertheless, homosexual activity is a sin, and as a sin, it is clearly condemned by God’s Word.

What must not be missed, however, is that the Word of God presents homosexuality as a symptom of generalised cultural departure from righteousness, and of God’s surrender of that culture to the consequences of its own choices. Whenever a society condones homosexuality, it is a demonstration that that society has jettisoned godliness and righteousness. Cultural acceptance of homosexual is symptomatic of spiritual decrepitude; such an environment is a sign of imminent demise of that culture. Moreover, whenever the pulpit is silent about any sin, it has failed to honour God and it fails to warn those who would otherwise hear the Word declared.

Note also that homosexuality never occurs in a vacuum; other sins always occur with it. In saying this, I am not saying that homosexuality is the worst sin of which a person may be guilty; neither am I suggesting there is no forgiveness for homosexual activity. Homosexuality is a grave sin, and it leads to other sins, primarily because at its root homosexuality is rebellion against God. The homosexual defies God and insists that he or she can live as they want without restraint; and ultimately, homosexuality is a form of temper tantrum against the presence of God.

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<sup>6</sup> See also LEVITICUS 18:22; 20:13

<sup>7</sup> E.g. JUDGES 19:22-26; 2 PETER 2:6-8; JUDE 7

Perhaps it is not surprising that with the increased acceptance of homosexual behaviour as normal within contemporary culture, there have arisen a growing number of apologists who purport to re-examine the Scriptures to explain away these passages. One of the first apologists for homosexual behaviour was an English writer named D. Sherwin Bailey in a book entitled “Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition.” Published in 1955, Bailey argued in the book that the real sin of Sodom was its failure to uphold the duty of hospitality to strangers. He admits that Jude 7 does admit a reading that condemns homosexuality, but he excuses this as an interpretation from the intertestamental period, and therefore having no binding authority today.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Bailey felt that the other passages cited condemned homosexual promiscuity and not the act itself. He argued that homosexuality was not necessarily good, but it was not necessarily bad; in his view it was to be evaluated on the permanence of the relationship established.

In the decades that have followed publication of Bailey’s book, our world has witnessed a rapid growth in the acceptance of the gay/lesbian/transgender movement. A former Pentecostal preacher named Troy Perry founded the Metropolitan Community Church for homosexual people. His rationale ran: (1) God loves homosexuals; (2) God made human beings in His own image; (3) God made homosexuals; (4) thus, homosexuality is a gift from God; (5) God accepts me and my homosexuality is good; and (6) God wants me to start a church for homosexuals.<sup>9</sup>

This appeal to religion to justify homosexuality has accelerated in the past four decades, and today there is rapidly increasing acceptance of homosexuality among churches. The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry provides training in homosexual religion including a number of sermons and liturgies.<sup>10</sup> I thought of the words the Apostle wrote while reading the titles of some of these sermons. “It’s not as if [those acting in the manner described] don’t know better. They know perfectly well they’re spitting in God’s face. And they don’t care—worse, they hand out prizes to those who do the worst things best” [ROMANS 1:32]!<sup>11</sup>

The Episcopal Church has become an advocate for homosexuality through ordination of practising homosexuals to the ministry and through the promotion of practising homosexuals to the bishopric. Recently, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has voted to approve appointing practising homosexuals to the pastorate. Other groups within the United States are rapidly yielding ground on the issue of same-sex marriage and on the appointment of practising homosexuals to ministry positions during recent years.

Within our own country, the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada have for a considerable period approved of performing same-sex marriages and presenting themselves as “welcoming” churches. I suspect that it is but a matter of time until other, presumably evangelical denominations make similar concessions. I remember attending a biennial Baptist conference some years back in which a prominent pastor spoke in favour of accepting practising homosexuals as full members without a murmur of dissent from the leadership. Already, the sympathies of many people, bereft of scriptural foundations, are turning toward approval of same-sex marriage. It is not that I believe homosexuals should be excluded from hearing the message of life; but it does not honour God to accept sinners who revel in their sin and who refuse to permit the Spirit to transform their lives.

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<sup>8</sup> James Montgomery Boice, **Genesis: An Expository Commentary** (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 1982) 622

<sup>9</sup> Roy Birchard, “Metropolitan Community Church,” *Foundations: Baptist Journal of History and Theology*, 20:2, April-June, 1977, 127-32, As summarised in Boice, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., “Prophet—A Queer Calling,” by Rev. Cody J. Sanders, “Coming Out Litany,” by Bill Smith and Susan Wilm, [http://www.clgs.org/resources/library/sermons\\_n\\_liturgies](http://www.clgs.org/resources/library/sermons_n_liturgies), accessed 20 August, 2009

<sup>11</sup> Peterson, *ibid.*

Earlier, when I referred to the Apostle's diagnosis of a terminal society, you may not have taken note of the way in which he concluded that passage. I want you to turn back to Romans, and focus on the final verse of the first chapter. The people in view as the Apostle writes are described as those who "know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too" [ROMANS 1:32].<sup>12</sup> Whenever sin becomes entrenched within a society, and in particular when a culture is moving toward termination, those practising the sin that describes that society not only appear to revel in the sin, but they seek to compel others to agree with them that they are normal!

Some people argue that lesbian behaviour is not mentioned in the Bible. Attempting to approve of an activity through silence is errant. First, it is impossible to derive approval for lesbian activity in light of the biblical condemnation voiced by Paul. "Refusing to know God, they soon didn't know how to be human either—women didn't know how to be women, men didn't know how to be men. Sexually confused, they abused and defiled one another, women with women, men with men—all lust, no love. And then they paid for it, oh, how they paid for it—emptied of God and love, godless and loveless wretches" [ROMANS 1:26, 27].<sup>13</sup> The biblical position is monogamy—one man married to one woman in a faithful, marital relationship. God has cautioned His people, "Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous" [HEBREWS 13:4].

Likewise, Jesus, answering the Pharisees on the matter of marriage and divorce, said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'" [MATTHEW 19:4, 5]. Sexual activity finds its only rightful expression within the confines of lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual marriage. God has made it clear that marriage is given for procreation, purity and pleasure, and the matrimonial state is reserved for husband and wife—man and woman united in a faithful, loving, complementary relationship.

**HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOUR INVITES DIVINE JUDGEMENT** — "Then the men said to Lot, 'Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it.' So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, 'Up! Get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city.' But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

"As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, 'Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.' But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. And as they brought them out, one said, 'Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away.'"

Those who engage in sin are not happy. There is no joy in a life estranged from God. The Bible acknowledges "the fleeting pleasures of sin" [see HEBREWS 11:25], but whatever pleasures exist are transient, effervescent, momentary. The Word of God teaches, "When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death" [ROMANS 6:20, 21]. We know intuitively that sin leads to death; yet we sin.

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<sup>12</sup> **Holy Bible: New Living Translation** (Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL 2004)

<sup>13</sup> Peterson, *ibid.*

Of a truth, God never promises us happiness, but the Bible does speak frequently of joy. All that Jesus taught His disciples was to ensure that His joy might be in them, and so that their “joy may be full” [JOHN 15:11]. As He prepared His disciples for His exodus, Jesus taught them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” [JOHN 16:20-24].

Have you ever noted how drunks often grow morose as they speak of their drunkenness? They know they are acting foolishly, but they refuse to help themselves. It is almost impossible to find long-time smokers who commend smoking as healthy, and they bewail their addiction. Drug addicts often speak of their sorrow at the monkey riding their back. In a similar manner, homosexuals are often very sad people. Within the homosexual sub-culture is found an exaggerated rate of suicide, promiscuity, alcoholism, drug abuse and venereal disease. According to LifeSite News, researchers at UCLA report that homosexuals seek treatment for either mental health issues or substance abuse at a rate that’s about twice that of heterosexuals. This cannot be attributed to presumed “homophobia,” as the finding holds true even in countries that have normalised and generally accept homosexual behaviour. This tendency to suffer serious mental and/or emotional behaviour was even more pronounced among lesbians and bisexual women. That news item concludes with this sobering statement: “for mental health reasons alone, clear thinking people should resist every effort to normalize homosexual behaviour. A loving society ought to care too much for people trapped in this lifestyle to enable them to go on believing the lie that their self-destructive conduct is perfectly acceptable.”<sup>14</sup> Defiance of the Creator is not a recipe for happiness; rather it leads to grief and sorrow.

The rapid spread of AIDS is not something to be celebrated—we should grieve at the loss of life and the sorrow that attends the death of those infected with the virus. The Lancet documents that the rate of HIV infection in African gay males is ten times the rate for other males.<sup>15</sup> The United Nations Aids agency estimates that there are 33 million people in the world who are infected with HIV, of whom two-thirds live in sub-Saharan Africa. A large percentage of those infected are homosexuals; and this deadly disease does not describe the serious cases of amebiasis and giardiasis which are endemic within the homosexual population. Syphilis and gonorrhoea have infected large numbers of homosexuals. Homosexuality can be deadly!

Individuals who have embraced the homosexual lifestyle are incredibly lonely. They long for friendship, and are incapable of finding what is lacking in their lives. Research reveals that only nine percent of homosexual males had less than twenty-five different sexual partners in their lifetime. Thirty-two percent had between one hundred and five hundred partners; fifteen percent had between five hundred and one thousand partners; and 28 percent reported over one thousand different partners. Only one percent reported lifetime monogamous relationships.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> “Homosexuals have double the mental health issues as straights,” AFR Talk Live, 8/20/09, 8:28:55 AM, <http://action.afa.net/Blogs/BlogPost.aspx?id=2147486363>, accessed 20 August, 2009

<sup>15</sup> “Alarming Africa male gay HIV rate,” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8158469.stm>, accessed 20 July, 2009

<sup>16</sup> Alan Bell and Martin Weinberg, **Homosexualities** (Simon and Schuster, New York 1978) 308-9, cited in Donald L. Faris, **Trojan Horse** (Welch Publishing, Burlington, ON 1989) 21

For too long, the pulpits have been silent on the practises of homosexuals. Should we not speak of the sorrow that this lifestyle brings to those who have bought into the lie that it is normal and healthy? One researcher reports that the modal white male homosexual claimed 1,000 or more sexual partners during a lifetime ... “most of whom were strangers prior to their sexual meeting and with whom sexual activity occurred only once. Only a few of these partners were persons for whom there was much care or affection or were ever seen socially again.”<sup>17</sup> Forty-three percent of white male homosexuals reported “cruising” for sexual contacts once a week or more. And more than one-third “cruised” once a month or less. The cruised in gay bars, steam baths, streets, private parties, parks and beaches, public toilets and movie theatres in that order. German sociologist Dannecker, himself a self-professed homosexual, bluntly declared the “faithful homosexual friendship” a myth.<sup>18</sup> Homosexuality is not a lifestyle to be celebrated; it is a lifestyle to be pitied!

**HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOUR CAN BE FORGIVEN** — “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].

Though these verses from the Letter to Corinthian believers are not part of the text for this message, they present a truth that we must declare whenever we speak of sinful behaviours. Each Christian is aware of elements within his or her life that condemn him or her as a sinner. Nevertheless, God, in mercy accepted each one who is saved, providing salvation through His Son, calling each believer to life. It is a vital truth that is too important to entrust to the pulpit alone—therefore, the message is entrusted to each Christian. The life of the redeemed child of God is meant to be a demonstration of the grace of God, opening the door to telling outsiders of the mercy and salvation of our Saviour, just as Peter has taught us: “In your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” [1 PETER 3:15].

Sodom had no Bible; and, as is evident from reading the divine account, they had no witness from the sole worshipper of God who resided within the city precincts. Does our city have a Bible? The only Bible that most people will ever read is the life of a Christian. Whether we are godly, or whether we live indistinguishably from the inhabitants of this dying world, we represent the Saviour before our neighbours. The manner in which we conduct ourselves will either serve to “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour” [TITUS 2:10], or dishonour His Name.

To be silent in the face of evil is cowardice; to speak with compassion is a mark of love.

“The fear of man lays a snare,  
but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.”

[PROVERBS 29:25]

God has spoken; and we must fear Him and speak the truth in love. Surely, none of us would wish to fall under the condemnation of the Word for living a life of cowardice before the world.

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<sup>17</sup> Alan Bell, “Homosexuality: An Overview,” in Barnhouse and Holmes, **Male and Female: Christian Approaches to Sexuality** (Seabury, 1976) 142, in Faris, *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Faris, *ibid.*



How awesome is God's promise to His people, and how terrible is the warning appended to that same promise. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death" [REVELATION 21:6-8]. We should tremble that "the cowardly" is named first, perhaps indicating that moral cowardice is especially condemning. It is time for Christians to be godly, to live lives marked by righteousness. Do not let any of us fall under the condemnation of the Living God who warns, "Cursed is he who does the work of the LORD with slackness" [JEREMIAH 48:10].

It is evident that our culture is decaying at a dizzying pace. Society is spiralling downward, rushing toward being tossed onto the trash heap of history. Morality is constantly redefined as people are apparently convinced that they can live as they please and God will nevertheless accept them. Churches are populated with unconverted church members who profess their love for Christ though giving no evidence of transformation—there is little to distinguish many of the professed people of God from inhabitants of the world.

Now is not the time for retreat from delivering the message of life; now is the time to proclaim boldly that God stands ready to deliver each person from condemnation and judgement. What is desperately needed for our world today are Christians who are convinced of the goodness of the Lord, who exhibit the transforming power of His salvation, and who know the redemption that is evident when He forgives the sinner. Before God, it is time to tell someone of your faith and of your Saviour. Do it today; do it now.

For all who are outside of the grace of God, the message of life is that God forgives all sin. The sinner need but confess that he or she is a sinner, and believe that God has given His Son as a sacrifice because of their sin. The Word of God presents that great truth in this manner. "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." That invites all who are willing to receive life when it says, "Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved" [ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13].

Are you a Christian? Stand firm in this most holy Faith and tell another today. Are you one who is yet outside the precincts of grace? Then, come into the light and come to life in Christ the Lord. Believe His Word and receive His gracious forgiveness that you may have life. Amen.