

# The Sands of Sodom

The Banquet Table of Consequences – Part VIII

Romans 1:26-27

## Introduction

I have read that the region of North Africa now known as the Sahara desert was once filled with herds of buffalo, lions, and antelope. Cattle grazed in lush pasture land that is now buried under mountains of sand. With the absence of rainfall, this once fertile land has been transmuted into a howling, relentless desert. The sands of the Sahara desert are never satisfied. They are constantly moving southward claiming more and more of the African continent. In fact, the Sahara desert is moving southward at the rate of one hundred seventy-five feet every day.

However, there are rivers of water that flow from the Atlas Mountains underneath the Sahara desert. Sometimes the water of these rivers comes to the surface and the land around it becomes, what we call, an oasis. There vegetation, crops, and animal life flourish. As long as the water is there, the killing sands of the desert are kept at bay.

The church of Jesus Christ is an oasis in the midst of a desert land. It is to be an oasis that offers the truth of the gospel, the water of life, to all who are dying of thirst, to all who are captives of the desert. And, the desert around us is never satisfied.

Today, there is evil, unrest, and chaos in the culture Paul predicted as much for every generation that abandons God and seats itself at a banquet table of terrible consequences.

He writes in Romans, chapter 1, verses 18 to 25,

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which*

*is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over . . .*

The word, in the Greek, for “gave them over,” is “paradidomi”. It means that God abandons man who has already abandoned God; God abandons mankind to their perversion and wandering – to be lost in a spiritual, emotional, and physical desert. Why? They refused His authority; they refused His Word, so He refuses them and their escape from the penalty of their rebellion. The text says here, in verse 24, that God abandons them,

*. . . 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.*

## The Consequences of Sin:

We have previously noted some of the consequences of sin.

**Mankind loses his dignity and role as king and queen over the animal kingdom and becomes ruled by the . . .**

1. One consequence is that mankind loses his dignity and rule as king and queen over the animal kingdom and instead, becomes ruled by the animals.

In our previous discussion of this, I illustrated the rise of animal rights. The laws that once viewed animals as property are now changing to treat animals as people.

Several states have changed the term “animal owner” to “animal guardian”. We have pet psychiatrists, pet vacation resorts, and pet cemeteries. Animals are, more and more, being treated like people.

While the Bible makes it very clear that we are not to treat animals with cruelty, and that the animal kingdom was created by God for man to enjoy, mankind has rejected God’s design and thus begins providing for what they believe the animals would enjoy.

Someone asked me if I saw the recent special on television about people who are putting braces on their animal’s teeth. I said, “No, I missed it.”

While children in our country, and in other countries, need braces, people are putting them on their dogs.

I was at the vet, several months ago, and I could not help but overhear a woman at the counter purchasing a tube of chicken flavored toothpaste. I thought that was a little much, but I suppose it is not when you consider braces are now fashionable for Fido, who suffers from an overbite.

Ultimately, when a society rejects God’s order of nature, animals find equality with mankind. The trouble then is that a society that treats animals like humans digresses to a corresponding loss of human value and dignity. So, humans now treat humans like animals and treat animals like humans.

**Mankind loses its ability to properly relate to human beings and defiles one another for . . .**

2. Thus, the second consequence is that mankind loses its ability to properly relate to human beings and there is unbridled

defilement of one another for personal pleasure.

Human beings are objects to be manipulated, mistreated, and abused.

It may be for physical pleasure or material pleasure that people lie to one another in order to close the deal. Graft and corruption are commonplace, as well as sexual immorality, which is nothing more than people seeking to use other people’s bodies to meet their own selfish desires.

**Mankind abandons the Author of nature and further defiles itself by reversing the . . .**

3. The desert sands do not stop there, however. For our study today we have a third consequence that mankind abandons the Author of nature and further defiles itself by reversing the order of nature within human relationships.

Continue in Romans, chapter 1, to verses 26 and 27.

*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.*

Do not miss the connection. When the God of nature is abandoned, the order of nature is abandoned.

This passage has become, in our generation, one of the most controversial passages in the entire Bible. And, one of the most politically incorrect.

**The Chaos of Sin:**

Frankly, as much chaos as there is in our culture over this issue, there is equally corresponding confusion in the church!

**In the Church . . .**

Recently, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. voted to overturn an earlier ban, and now allow active homosexuals and lesbians to be ordained to the ministry. This is the sixth largest Protestant association of churches in America.

One of the first official documents to embrace homosexuality was the Friends’ report, “Towards a

Quaker View of Sex,” in 1963. It included the statements,

*one should no more deplore homosexuality than left-handedness*

and,

*surely it is the nature and quality of a relationship that matters.*

Similarly, in 1979, the Division of Social Responsibility in the Methodist Church, stated in “A Christian Understanding of Human Sexuality,” that,

*Homosexual activities are not intrinsically wrong; for homosexual men and women in permanent relationships characterized by love can be an appropriate and Christian way of expressing their sexuality.*

In 1999, the *Biblical Recorder*, North Carolina’s Baptist paper, told that, at the University of Richmond, a Baptist-affiliated university, the discrimination against sexual orientation has been dropped. Trustee Clint Hopkins, a retired Southern Baptist pastor, voted for the new policy stating,

*Jesus never made sexual habits an issue with his followers. We want to be as much like Jesus as possible.*

You may remember when the woman, who was caught in adultery, was brought to Jesus. Did he seem to care about her sexual activity? What did He tell her, “Go and sin some more?!” No. In John, chapter 8, verse 11b, He said,

*... go ... [and] sin no more.*

In other words, “Stop committing adultery.”

Clint Hopkins went on to say,

*It isn’t proper for us to give too much attention to sex in deciding who is in and out of the kingdom.*

Oh? Then was Paul improper when he wrote, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, in I Corinthians, chapter 6, verses 9b through 10,

***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.***

Four of the six lifestyles he mentions have something to do with sexual relations.

Again, in his first letter to Timothy, chapter 1, verses 6 through 10, Paul wrote,

***For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. But we know that the Law is good . . . realizing the fact that 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,***

In Ephesians, Paul again makes sexuality an evidence of salvation. This then, makes it an issue of whether or not a person is in or out of the kingdom. He is not saying you cannot be forgiven of these things. He is saying you cannot remain unrepentant in these and believe, at the same time, that God will cover His holy eyes, pat you on the back, and say, “Everything’s okay.”

Paul writes to the Ephesians, in chapter 5, verses 3 and 5 through 6,

***But do not let immorality or any impurity . . . be named among you . . . For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person . . . has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words . . .***

In other words, reports by Clint Hopkins and Committees within mainline denominations are simply deceived and are deceiving others with empty words.

### **In the Culture . . .**

How anyone can say that the Bible does not address sexual relationships is inconceivable. And yet, they do.

The author of Hebrews said plainly, in chapter 13, verse 4,

***Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.***

In spite of that, one religious author has written, *Sexuality, as we understand it today, is not addressed in the Bible. It is a modern concept . . . in this field we must look to the ongoing*

*revelation of science and of newly emerging voices of experience.*

How did the church and the religious world become so confused? Because they have set aside the Bible and said, "It isn't relevant! It really doesn't address the modern issues of relationships."

John McNeill wrote,

*The scriptures are historically limited; Biblical judgments against homosexuality are not relevant to today's debate.*

In other words, the Bible just is not sophisticated enough to understand the issues of modern life!

Marti Nissinen adds, as quoted in the *Master's Seminary Journal* article entitled, "Homosexuality and the Church,"

*Paul's arguments are based on Jewish moral codes that are culture-specific . . . in fact, Paul may have needed sexual therapy himself.*

Was Paul out of date? Did he have some naive impression of sexuality, including homosexuality? Was he uninformed and unaware?

The Greek world that surrounded Paul, had, by his day, already begun to teach homosexual love as the highest of loves. Bisexuality was considered the norm and straight heterosexuals were considered fearful and prudish. Many highborn Greeks maintained male concubines along with their wives.

In Rome, it was no different. Fourteen of the first fifteen Roman emperors were homosexuals. In fact, the emperor, during the writing of the book of Romans, was a man named Nero. He had already openly married a man and was known for his baths with young boys.

This is not a modern concept; this is not unique to the twenty-first century! Paul was surrounded by it, and under the guidance the Holy Spirit, condemned it and every other form of sexual immorality.

Now, I want to raise a number of issues in this discussion, but if you would like to do more study on your own, James B. De Young has written a book, simply titled, *Homosexuality*, which is a thorough study of both scripture and contemporary arguments in favor of it. Also, there is a booklet entitled, *Same-Sex Partnerships?*, by John Stott.

### **Defending the sin of Sodom:**

Several arguments are being heard not only outside in our culture, but inside denominational

debates, including the one within the Presbyterian council.

### **The Bible does not condemn . . .**

1. There are arguments such as this one that says the Bible does not condemn homosexuality, only homosexuals who act selfishly.

They state, in the words of Boswell, a pseudo-Bible scholar,

*The men of Sodom were not punished in the Old Testament for their homosexuality, but for their inhospitality.*

Let us look at the record. Turn to Genesis, chapter 19, verses 1 through 11.

*Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.*

*And he said, "Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." They said however, "No, but we shall spend the night in the square."*

*Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.*

*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.*

*But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door.*

*And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves trying to find the . . .*

Doctor?

*. . . doorway.*

This was not inhospitality, it was unrestrained lust and perversion. These men so craved to sodomize the angels that, even after being blinded, their lust continued to drive them toward their evil intention.

The homosexual scholars say, and I quote,

*There is no reason to believe that sexual relations was part of the picture.*

The words, in verse 5, from the New American Standard,

*. . . Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them.*

are translated in the King James Version as,

*. . . Bring them out unto us, that we may know them.*

The word "know" does not have to mean anything other than, "get acquainted with them." However, the very same word, in the Hebrew, "yada," is used as Lot tried to get them to take his two daughters, saying, in verse 8,

*. . . [they] have not "known" . . .*

*"yada,"*

*man . . .*

The New Testament book of Jude provides additional commentary on Genesis, chapter 19, as Jude writes, in verse 7.

*Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross . . .*

*inhospitality?!*

*. . . immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example, in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.*

**A homosexual was . . .**

2. Another argument is that a homosexual was born that way and cannot change.

This, of course, is a key issue, by the way. Because, if you cannot change, then it is not a choice – you simply cannot help it.

A man, or woman, may, from a very early age, have a propensity toward a certain sin. In fact, Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 1, indicates as much when it refers, to our struggle with that besetting,

*. . . sin that so easily entangles us.*

This is a reference to that particular sin which brings us into intense struggle with sinful urges and temptations.

A person, however, is no more born a homosexual than he is born an adulterer, or a liar, or a pornographer, or a polygamist. He chooses to be a liar; he chooses to commit adultery; he chooses to rape . . . All sin is a choice.

Although, in a way this statement is true – we were all born that way and none of us can change, including homosexuals. They truly cannot change. Frankly, no sinner can change apart from the power of God through the saving redemption of Jesus Christ and daily submission to the Holy Spirit.

Whether it is politically correct or not, the Bible never refers to homosexuality as a genetic issue or a sickness – but a sin. And that happens to be wonderful news, by the way! Sickneses may not have a cure. Genetic problems may never be resolved. But sin can be cured. There is a remedy for sin!

Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthian church, chapter 6, verses 9 through 11, these powerfully revealing words,

*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor 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 . . .*

He did not say, "such are some of you," but "such were some of you!" What happened to them? Paul goes on to tell us.

*. . . but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name*

*of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.*

The Bible never tells us to accept each other's behavior when it violates scripture. In fact, it simply tells us to confess, repent, and experience the daily forgiveness and power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Jesus never . . .**

3. Another prevalent argument is that Jesus never uttered one word against homosexuality, so He is not against it.

The first part of that statement is true – but He also never uttered one word against rape, incest, bestiality, or pedophilia. So, are we to suppose He is not against those either?

The Metropolitan Community Churches are churches led by homosexual clergy and filled with homosexual members. They have spent enormous energy attempting to join homosexuality with the evangelical church. I have a copy of their small group study on, "What the Bible does and does not say about homosexuality."

I read it and was saddened to not only hear the typical arguments for legitimizing evil, but the implications that David and Jonathan loved each other in a homosexual way. The study even implied that a lesbian relationship was perhaps the basis of love between Ruth and Naomi.

On the last page of this small group Bible study were these words about the church,

*Whoever you are, wherever you may be, whatever the circumstances of your life, it is important for you to know that Jesus Christ died to take away your sins, not your sexuality. Christ accepts you as you are, and so do we.*

Ladies and gentlemen, there is a vast difference between saying Jesus Christ accepts you as you are and Jesus Christ accepts anything you want to do. Jesus Christ does not promise you freedom in sin, but freedom from sin. And He accepts the homosexual who comes to Him in repentance and confession of sin; as He accepts the murderer, the rapist, the greedy, the gossip, the arrogant.

However, He does not then say, "Now go back and continue in that lifestyle," but,

*. . . go . . . [and] sin no more.*

**A homosexual is merely doing . . .**

4. The next argument is that a homosexual is merely doing what comes naturally, thus it should be considered an alternative lifestyle.

The attempt is made to prove, from Romans, chapter 1, that Paul is condemning unnatural homosexual behavior – greedy, lustful, multiple-partnered homosexual behavior. Or, that he is condemning homosexual acts performed by heterosexuals to whom such acts are unnatural.

That is very clever exegesis, but it ignores the meaning of the words. Paul, in fact, goes to the order of nature and says that females abandoned nature and males abandoned nature and burned in their lust toward one another, which is unnatural or, literally, "against the order of nature," as God created it.

Notice the language he uses in Romans, chapter 1, verses 26 and 27,

*. . . degrading passions . . . exchanged the natural function . . . burned in their desire . . . committing indecent acts . . . receiving . . . the due penalty of their error.*

Remember, if you ignore the Creator of nature, you may violate the order of nature, and you will sit down to a table of awful consequences.

But wait! They say, homosexual behavior is biologically alluring to them; it comes naturally to them, thus they are merely going along with their nature.

Does the Lord say, "Listen, since lusting after women comes naturally to you, it's okay? Since coveting after things comes naturally to you, I understand."

Should a man be allowed to rape simply because it is biologically alluring to him? Are not adulterers and fornicators doing what is biologically tempting to them?

Ladies and gentlemen, listen to this profound statement and, if you do not get anything else, get this – all sin comes naturally.

Every one of us have desperately wicked hearts that, left to natural urges, natural temptations, and natural leanings, would be capable of every sin under heaven. We do not determine what is acceptable behavior based upon what comes naturally. When society and the church buy into that deception, the desert sands sweep in with greater force and speed.

*Newsweek*, in May, 2001, ran an article on a man who had five wives and nearly thirty children. Who is to say he is wrong? Why not?

The polygamist says, "This is natural."

He has five wives. Why not?! One to eat with; one to take on vacation; one to work out in the yard with; one to clean house; one to watch the kids. What a system.

And it comes naturally!

Dear friends, the Bible informs us that our nature is fallen. You are the last person in the world that you ever want to trust. You happen to need a new nature, as Paul wrote in Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 1 through 5,

*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),*

The church is not supposed to condone the nature of man, but condemn it – and reveal its evil and expose its need for redemption. And then, point to the Savior, who died to take away the sin of the world.

## **Application – Resisting the Sands of Sin:**

There are three principles that emerge from our study so far.

### **When God’s Word is rejected . . .**

1. When God’s Word is rejected, the depravity in a person’s life can be unbelievable.

One example of this, according to John MacArthur Jr., in his book entitled *Romans*, is as follows,

*A San Francisco coroner estimated that ten percent of his city’s homicides were related to sado-masochistic sex among homosexuals, so Bob Greene stated in The Chicago Tribune of*

*March 19, 1981. The city government of San Francisco has even conducted workshops to teach homosexuals how to avoid serious bodily harm while engaging in sado-masochistic sex, although, by definition, both sadism and masochism are destructive! The very purpose of both deviations is to inflict pain and harm – sadism on others and masochism on oneself.*

### **When God’s design for relationships is refused . . .**

2. A second principle is that when God’s design for relationships is refused, the destruction of a person’s life will be inevitable.

While living, there is the:

- Utter loss of personal identity and self worth,
- Unfulfilled desire that simply craves for more,
- Unmitigated guilt and anger.

There is terrible personal destruction and disease; terrible loss of personal dignity; terrible loss of healthy relationships.

That is not the greatest loss, however. This is only the beginning. There is the eternal loss of heaven, because unrepentant sinners, Paul clearly said, will not inherit the kingdom of Heaven.

Ignore God and you invite the sands of the desert to sweep ever so subtly, ever so surely into the crevices of your heart.

### **When God’s Word is received . . .**

3. Thirdly, when God’s Word is received, the difference in a person’s life becomes remarkable.

The apostle Paul wrote, in II Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 17,

*Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

The sands of the desert are repelled by the Spirit of God – the wasteland is replaced by an oasis of dignity and purpose and forgiveness and redemption and fellowship with Christ and His true church.

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