

A New View of Sodom
August 2, 2016

If you have been a part of church culture as long as I have been, you no doubt are familiar with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Engrained in the mindset of the conservative, evangelical mind is that idea that Sodom represents the condemnation of God upon homosexuality, in any and all forms it may take.

However, in recently reading the passage that immediately precedes Sodom's destruction, there seems to be more than simple homosexual relationships that are at play. Read with me what is said in the passage:

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.⁵ And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them."⁶ Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him,⁷ and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. ⁸ 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."⁹ 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. ¹⁰ But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door. ¹¹ 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. (Genesis 19:4-11, ESV)

Clearly, homosexuality was a part of the issue involved, but let's be really clear: it was not the monogamous, homosexual companionship that was condemned here. What you see in Sodom was the anonymous, violent, virulent, self-obsessed, compulsive and dehumanizing acts that certain men were engaged in (in their expression of homosexuality). I have seen this same kind of dehumanizing and violent sexual behavior directed in heterosexual couples (married and unmarried), in anonymous violations that occur in our culture on a daily basis. I have seen this kind of sexualized violence splashed across the newspapers and television screens in our nation. I have even seen these kinds of acts implied in things that our culture deems to be entertainment.

Now, hear me clearly – I am not arguing that homosexuality is “correct” behavior but please, I emphatically say to my conservative, evangelical friends: DO NOT use Sodom as a blanket condemnation of all homosexual men or women who are engaged in a monogamous, life-long partnership. It does disservice to the Scripture and it perpetrates hatred toward those who are in deep need of the grace and love of Christ.

Condemn violence...condemn sexuality that is expressed selfishly...Condemn the conditions of dehumanization that occur in our world. But even more, demonstrate the willing graciousness of Jesus Christ as you engage a lost and sinful humanity.

We are all in need of that kind of grace and, I think, a new view of Sodom!

Dr. Don