Faith

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

My faith is the most important thing to me. It is now, as it was then. I gave my life to the Lord and it was my duty to spread his word and let his word inspire those who followed me.

As pastor of a minor but dedicated flock, I had responsibility for a small group of men and women who looked up to me as an exemplar of a good, Christian life.

The words of the Old Testament are clear: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination." Leviticus Chapter 18 verse 22, and If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them." Leviticus Chapter 20 verse 13. And in the New Testament where in his letter to the Romans Saint Paul likewise condemned those men who “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”. That penalty would be damnation.

So, what happens when a man like me – a man committed to live his life by those scriptures - falls in love with another man?

I never thought of myself as gay. I met my wife just out of high school. I thought we were in love. She was certainly in love with me. I suppose that I was more occupied with my love of God and my desire to do his will. We married and had two children. But it was her choice not to follow God, and we parted. Divorce is a reality of the modern world. It is sad, but my call to God’s plan was stronger than any desire for her. I had always assumed that despite my divorce that I would honour my commitment and be with no other woman but her. I kept that oath, but not in the way I imagined.

Dwight Boland was a follower and a man who saw me as a messenger of God. When I saw him look at me, I saw the adoration. It had an effect on me, I suppose. But these were unnatural feelings – sinful feelings. It was almost like incest. He was my brother, or even my son, although he was a year or two older than me. He trusted me, but in return I desired him, in the very worst way. I wanted his penis in my hands, in my mouth, inside of my bowel. The thoughts disgusted me but also excited me beyond all measure.

For those of us who believe in the truth of the Bible, while there is unconditional love for all people including homosexuals, the prohibition of homosexual acts is absolute. We can love the person, but not the activity. So, the simple remedy is not to act on your feelings, and to pray that these desires must cease. I tried. How I tried.

I went through a small crisis of faith. I questioned God. I asked: “How could You do this to me, Lord? How could You take a normal man who believes in You and let him think these things?” I asked Him for a path from this dreadful place. How could I get what my body desired and still be true to my Faith?

And then as if to answer, something happened. I attended a conference for lay preachers on modern issues. There were many who considered that God’s love was more important than old codes, that the love of Jesus is more important than prohibitions, but for me the truth of Scripture could not permit selective adherence. Homosexuality is a sin. However, as was pointed out by one speaker, when it comes to the question of Transgenderism, the answer is not so clear cut.

In Matthew 19:12, Jesus speaks of “eunuchs who were born as such, eunuchs who were made so by others, and eunuchs who choose to live as such for the kingdom of heaven”. Christ understood that there were intersexed people, and those who were without genitals and they were welcome in heaven. The speaker suggested that the same applied to intersexed people who were male but appeared female. So, by extension somebody who had been male but now appeared female was – in terms of the Old Testament’s strictly binary approach – women. And women can lay with a man and it shall not be sinful (if it is not adultery).

I confess that when I first considered this presentation I had decided to concentrate on the last part of the passage: “Eunuchs who choose to live as such for the kingdom of heaven”. Some had suggested that this passage referred to celibacy, but I could not accept that. A eunuch is a eunuch, so I looked for castration not only as a way out of my urges, but to show my commitment to the kingdom that is coming.

I went to see a doctor and he suggested that such a drastic and irreversible step was not a good idea, when the same result could be achieved through pharmacology. He said that he would prescribe the drug if I consulted with a psychiatrist first, which I did. The psychiatrist was not a Christian and had little understanding of what I was going through. He said that he doubted it would help, but that if wanted to try it he would not stand in my way. But his diagnosis was simple: “You’re gay. Get over it.” But he gave me the prescription anyway. Perhaps he was worried that I might try to mutilate myself.

I started taking the drug. He was right. It did not stop the feelings I had for Dwight, but it did reduce the intensity of the urges. But I liked the other effects that the drug had on me. It had a calming influence. I no longer had aggressive feelings. I think that I began to understand why those in Christ’s own time who would castrate themselves before facing God, could believe that this was a better state to be in at that moment. It felt like a state not driven by base desires – for copulation and domination. It was peaceful and pure. But I still desired Dwight.

While I told my congregation nothing of what I had done, I did tell them that I believed that I was entering a higher state, and becoming closer to God. That is how I felt.

But the drug also made me feel womanly. There is no better word for it. I felt in need of somebody to satisfy new urges in me. I felt in need of somebody to keep me and protect me. I felt that I needed a man beside me. That is when my thoughts returned to the conference. I started to wonder if I could be a woman, as some men have become through the miracles of science. Dwight’s woman.

Now, I should explain that I had never had any transgender impulses at all. I was a man and had always felt that I was a man. I had never been either tall or muscular, but I had never been weak or effeminate. I was normal. I had been a husband, and I was still a father of two boys, now separated from me, and outside the church. That was what made it so hard for me to understand how I could find myself in this situation.

After taking the androgen blocking drugs for some months there had been some physical changes that were noticeable. My beard growth had slowed to a standstill and my skin and hair had become softer. I even started to develop breasts, even without any female hormones. My doctor said that this was normal, as a male body does have these hormones (some more than others) but they are neutralized by the androgens. Blocking androgens allows small amounts to influence the body.

My flock noticed the changes. One of the woman said that I appeared to be turning into an angel. Angels are supposed to be soft and sexless so I suggested that view might be understandable. I did actually say that I was feeling “my masculinity draining away as I get closer to God” although I did not say that I was responsible.

I started to let my hair grow at that time too. And I started to wear bigger and more colourful ties with my suits which were becoming baggy on me as my muscles disappeared. I suggested to my followers that I was responding to God’s call. I am not even sure that this was a lie. Somehow it seemed to me that God might be showing me a way out. A way to be the eunuch accepted by Jesus, and perhaps be able to have a sexual relationship with Dwight as permitted by scripture.

I think that how I preached changed subtly too. I started to talk more about love within our group and the need for cooperation. Somehow lecturing people was no longer my style. I had evolved through the loss of the male hormones. It occurred to me that these biochemicals were the source of much of what is bad about the human condition – pride and violence, and lust. I was not that kind of person anymore.

I also spoke at length about the importance of women in building the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. I read from the Book of Ruth. I spoke about the Virgin Mary as the vessel by which God came to earth, Mary Magdalene as the thirteenth apostle, and the gift that women enjoyed as givers of life. The scriptures are often cited as asserting the dominance of men over women, but that is not so. The Bible is full of stories of powerful women. In many ways I felt that I was becoming one of them, slowly but surely.

But, as I have explained, the sinful thoughts continued. The only difference now was that in private moments of fantasy there was no erection. And more and more often, in my dreams I was not just receiving my man, but I was doing so as a woman. If that were to happen, there is no sin. Even if the woman I was had some residual flesh of a manly nature, I could still be a woman. This is how I rationalized my position. My thoughts no longer seemed sinful.

I felt that I needed to say something to Dwight. In particular I was presenting one Sunday, and I could see Dwight looking up at me with what was clearly adulation. I had to pause for a moment. The look was so thrilling that I was almost overcome. After a moment of looking skyward before a puzzled congregation, I was able to continue.

I asked to see him after evening prayers. He strode into my office looking every inch the dominant male that he was. I felt so small and fragile in his presence. It felt good.

“I am changing,” I said to him. He nodded. Everybody knew it was so.

So, I asked him flatly: “If God’s plan was that I should become a woman, would you be … a man to me?” I was going to say: “my man,” but I stopped myself.

“Pastor Paul,” he said to me, “You are the source of all my happiness in life at the moment. Through you I have come to know God. If God could allow me to be even closer to you, then I would be very happy. But, I am not a queer. You understand that, don’t you.”

“A relationship between a man and a woman is not queer, or sinful,” I explained. “The Lord recognises women who have not always lived as women.” I was, of course, referring to Matthew 19:12. I said: “I would not ask you to commit a sin, and homosexuality is a sin. It would have to be a relationship between a man and a woman. If that is God’s plan, of course.”

“As always,” he said, “I will be guided by you, Pastor Paul, and by the will of God as you explain it.”

I was so thrilled I could hardly sleep that night. I knew then what I had to do. I had to become a woman. I had to have my body changed so that I could receive this man’s body into mine. I had to learn to be a woman and a wife – somebody that he would be proud to call his. Somebody who could offer him everything that a woman could, even if that did not include his children. After all, it would be too much to expect that God might gift me a womb.

But I prayed that just that change might be brought about by a miracle, always in the knowledge that the Lord does not grant miracles often. It is more likely that He will lay out a path and then give me the strength to make the changes myself, to the extent that modern science can allow.

But there was a sign. I was visited by an older woman in our flock who had told me that she had decided that fighting old age was vanity and she would be destroying her HRT pills. I knew what those were. She had a stack and I asked her to give them to me. I thanked God for what He had done for me. He had placed in my hands the power to feminize myself.

My Ministry had been my life to that point, but somehow that seemed of little importance to me, such was my infatuation with Dwight. I continued to act as Pastor and led four services each week. I found myself preaching more substantially upon the role of women, and in particular the words of the apostle Paul: “But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. … For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. … Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.”

I was going to become a woman come from man (myself) and made for a man (Dwight). I could give myself to a man, and do so in a way countenanced by the Bible. I could avoid sin and still have what I wanted. It made complete sense. I was so excited.

I let my hair grow even longer and I let the hormone pills do their work upon my body.

I told Dwight that I was changing even further, and he could see it happening. It was a miracle.

I did not mention the pills, so I think that he may have thought God was working his wonders upon me. It was not my intention to deceive, or if it was, then I seek forgiveness.

The only thing that I had to make an effort to change, was my voice. I had always thought that my “preaching voice” which was a mellow baritone, had good tone and authority, but it was a little below my natural speaking voice. When my ministry started I practised my sermons and recorded them, and I was now doing the same to lift my voice. Practice had worked before and it worked again, but I needed to introduce my new voice with care.

I decided to preach from the Book of Ruth and of the trials of her mother in law Naomi, who is the female Job of the Bible. I wore a long robe rather than my usual suit and tie. Ruth is a story of obedience, and the power of God to lift women out of adversity, told in the finest prose. I closed by delivering Ruth’s oath in my female voice. “Where you die, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part you and me”. Everybody thought I had become a woman in front of them. I dropped to my knees, and in the same voice, I cried out to the ceiling in the same voice: “Whether as man or woman, guide me, oh Lord.”

The whole hall fell silent as if waiting for a bolt of lightning, or some lesser divine sign. If I had been selling snake oil I would have engineered something for this moment, but I am no such person. I am a believer, but I knew nothing would happen. I did the best thing I could in circumstances – I fainted.

When I came to I had been moved to the couch in the office, and Dwight was beside me, with others behind him.

“Pastor, I have told the others what you told me,” he said. “I told them that you have had a vision that you are changing. We all witnessed it tonight. Surely you have been made woman. I, with the others who carried you here, felt your flesh beneath the clothing. Surely it is a miracle.”

Another said: “Pastor Paul, what should we do?”

“Do not call me Paul,” I said to them all. “From now on you should call me Ruth. I am rescued by God. He will make me for a husband of his choosing, as he did for the young widow of the Bible”.

“Ruth,” said Dwight with a look in his eyes that must surely be love, or something very close to it. “I could be your husband. If you are willing, I wish to be your husband.” I almost wet myself with joy.

He went on: “When your maleness shrivels away and the Lord forms a sleeve for me, and a womb within, we can be married.”

May the Lord guide the surgeon. And as for the womb, well Dwight is no expert. I am not about to wait that miracle to get into bed with this man. So a date has been set to follow the operation and convalescence.

If God is willing, a womb will follow. But for now, I have my man. Praise the Lord.

The End

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