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Frank W. Nelte

## **WHY DID GOD ALLOW THINGS LIKE POLYGAMY AND SLAVERY IN OLD TESTAMENT ISRAEL?**

The Old Testament is a record of God's dealings with mankind in general and, from the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob onwards, with the nations of Israel in particular. In the days of Moses God gave Israel His laws in a codified way. The laws and statutes and judgments are practical applications of the great principles contained in the ten commandments. The Bible is also known as "the Word of God" because it reveals to us God's thinking on every subject that is touched upon in the Bible. In the absence of direct statements, the Bible still gives us principles that can in one way or another be applied to every situation with which life may confront us. These principles enable us to at least try to be in harmony with all of God's intentions and purposes, even if in practice we find that we often fall short.

We in our western societies today have no difficulties in understanding that things like slavery and polygamy are morally wrong, and that God would not want us to engage in either polygamy or in slavery. Yet these are things that God allowed Israel to be involved in during the time of the Old Testament. So the question is:

IF GOD DID NOT REALLY WANT SLAVERY, THEN WHY DID HE ALLOW IT? AND IF GOD DID NOT REALLY WANT POLYGAMY, THEN WHY DID HE ALLOW IT?

The question can be expanded to include other things (like military service and killing in warfare, divorce and remarriage, etc.) that are clearly contrary to God's intentions and desires. The principle is the same. And the question is:

WHY would God have allowed some things that are clearly contrary to His original intentions?

Let's see if we can understand this matter.

### **WE MUST SEEK GOD'S MIND**

To Old Testament Israel God said in very plain and direct words:

For MY THOUGHTS *ARE* NOT YOUR THOUGHTS, NEITHER *ARE* YOUR WAYS MY WAYS, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9 AV)

It is also clear that Israel did NOT really seek to understand God's thoughts or His ways of doing things. In a sense, God WISHED that they would have had a desire to seek out His will and intentions. As God had said in the days of Moses ...

O THAT THERE WERE SUCH AN HEART IN THEM, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!  
(Deuteronomy 5:29 AV)

But they didn't really have the heart (or the mind) that God is looking for. And so God already back then

spoke about a new covenant or agreement that He would make with people in the future ...

But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I WILL PUT MY LAW IN THEIR INWARD PARTS, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jeremiah 31:33 AV)

Putting the laws of God into the very minds of people (by giving them the Holy Spirit as an indwelling power) would ensure that people would, with effort, be able to understand the mind of God on every issue and on every matter.

This must be true for every Christian. When God gives us His Holy Spirit, that very gift thrusts upon us the responsibility to seek to understand the mind of God on every issue, something the Israelites in Old Testament times had not been willing to do. While the free gift of the Holy Spirit MAKES IT POSSIBLE for us to understand God's mind, it nevertheless still requires serious and intense effort on our part to get to that point ... where we DO understand God's thinking. Isaiah 55:8 should not be true for people who have the Holy Spirit guiding and directing their minds. But never underestimate the effort God expects us to put forth so that we more clearly understand His ways and His thinking!

To be quite clear: The Holy Spirit MAKES IT POSSIBLE for us to attain a certain level of understanding God and His ways. But without diligent and intense effort on our part we will NEVER attain to that potential level of understanding! The intense effort God expects us to put forth is typified by verses like 2 Timothy 2:15 ...

STUDY to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15 AV)

In the New Testament there are about twenty references to "THE WILL OF GOD". It should be clear that we in God's Church have a responsibility to seek to understand that will of God. And God expects us to put out effort in seeking to understand Him.

So let's try to understand the creation of mankind from GOD's point of view. Let's see if this can help us to understand WHY God may have allowed some things in Old Testament times that ideally God would never have wanted human beings to become involved in, and that God does not allow for us today to be involved in.

### THE NECESSITY OF "A FREE WILL" FOR HUMAN BEINGS

It is God's stated intention to create a Family of spirit-born sons and daughters. The beings that will become a part of that Family will all share God's views and standards and hopes and purposes, even though every single member of that Family will have a free will. The training and experiences that every member of the Family will have gone through will ensure that this free will that each member possesses will NEVER be used to destroy what God will be building; it will never be used to tear down or to oppose God in any way. It will always be used in ways that God will approve of.

Prior to the creation of mankind God had created spirit beings, a third of whom under the leadership of Satan rebelled against God, causing terrible destruction throughout the universe in the process. The training and testing process God devised for mankind will forestall anything like Satan's rebellion ever happening again after God has created spirit-born sons.

It is the choices, made repeatedly and consistently, that a totally free human will makes which show God

what He needs to learn about every single person before God is prepared to change that person into a spirit-born member of His Family. To be really sure that each human mind is clearly exposed to God, God made it so that our human minds are not just "totally neutral" when evaluated against being for or against God's ways; to be really sure God made it so that our minds "instinctively" as it were have a leaning towards favouring ways that are opposed to God. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

Because THE CARNAL MIND IS ENMITY AGAINST GOD: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (Romans 8:7 AV)

For "carnal mind" in this verse simply read "NATURAL mind". By starting us off with minds that are not really subject to His laws and that have an inherently hostile disposition towards God, God is ensuring that we must, with our own free wills, make efforts to change our minds towards Him and towards His laws and His ways before we can achieve the purposes for which God created us in the first place. If we do not really put out the effort to change our ways of thinking so that our thoughts CAN actually be along the same lines as God's thoughts, then it shows God that we would not really fit into the future eternity that He has in mind for His Family ... and therefore there would be no point in God changing such individuals into spirit-beings. It goes far beyond us keeping the Sabbaths and Holy Days and tithing and abiding by a few other laws of God. It is THE MIND that God is testing before granting THAT MIND (placed into a new spirit-body) the opportunity to exist for all future eternity. It is that mind which must be "renewed" (see Romans 12:2).

And a free will is absolutely vital to show God what He really wants to know about us.

However, here comes the snag:

Anytime you give people a TOTALLY FREE WILL, you must obviously be prepared for those people using their free wills (be it occasionally or be it frequently) in ways that YOU would not really have wanted them to go. Now when they DO make decisions with their free wills that you disapprove of, you can do one of two things:

1) Either you can decide to stop working with them altogether. The ways in which they have used their free wills make quite clear to you that there is simply no point in you continuing to work with them in any way; their minds are just totally contrary to what you are looking for and what you had expected. Severing all contact with them is really the best permanent solution for both parties ... since THEY obviously wouldn't enjoy working with you any more than you enjoy working with them. The views are just totally opposite and incapable of being reconciled.

2) Or you decide that their lack of knowledge and experience is a major reason for their use of their free wills in opposition to what you would like to see them do. So you decide to continue working with them, exposing them to situations that will give them EXPERIENCES which show why their views are not good and why your views are right. While not really approving of certain things they may do with their free wills, you decide to continue working with them by setting certain parameters around those things you disapprove of, to at least limit the ways in which they are in conflict with your ways. Your allowances for them to continue using their free wills in some measure of opposition to your desired intentions is not really "approval" at all! It is really only "containment" of wrong ways to preserve "free will status" while allowing time to learn from experiences. You would obviously only choose this way of dealing with them BECAUSE you had strong hopes that at some point they would change and start to see things YOUR way! Also, allowing them "a certain measure of leeway" in not really using their free wills as you would like does not preclude you from, at some point in the future, deciding to withdraw that "leeway" altogether ... because experiences had ABUNDANTLY proved that their ways are indeed wrong and bad and harmful, irrespective of whether they acknowledge this or not.

Let's now transfer this scenario to God.

### WHEN GOD CREATED MAN

Adam is called "the first man" (1 Corinthians 15:45), and Eve is called "the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20), meaning "the mother of all human beings".

Before creating Adam God had NEVER AT ANY TIME created "human beings". Creating Adam and Eve was a new experience for God, an experience from which God would learn many things. It was a new experience for God to create beings "in His own image and after His own likeness".

God had extremely "high hopes" for this creation.

[Comment: It should be quite clear that any "man-like" creatures that supposedly existed before Adam were NOT CREATED BY GOD! God created man "in His own image" and any supposed pre-Adamic "man-like" creatures would be nothing more than caricatures of God! They would be a perverse mockery of God and His beauty and brilliance and intelligence! God would never ever make some "sub-human creature" that outwardly actually resembled HIS OWN appearance! That would be an insult to the glory of God! If any such "man-like" creatures did exist before Adam (i.e. during the time that Satan ruled this earth), they would be an expression of the perverse and twisted and sarcastic sense of humour of Satan. But they would assuredly not have been created by God! They would, however, make clear why Satan can NEVER again be reconciled to God. Satan has just gone too far in opposition to God.]

Put yourself in God's shoes: If YOU were the Creator, would YOU create a creature that looks like a caricature of yourself?? WHY would you possibly want to mock your own personal appearance, by creating a low-IQ, sub-human species that looked more like you than like any other creature?

Anyway, such "man-like" creatures would assuredly not have had "the spirit in man", which is something that only God can give. Such "man-like" creatures would have been caricatures of God in the same way as political cartoonists present us with caricatures of leading political figures. Caricatures are not intended to be "complimentary", but they ARE an expression of a mind which is hostile to God.]

So when God had created Adam and Eve, God was hoping for the best. God's mind was not on anticipating the myriad ways in which these human beings would probably transgress His laws and oppose His intentions for them. God is positive; He is not critical, resentful, hostile and sarcastic towards the things He Himself creates.

God had created them with free wills and God made known to them His purposes and intentions for them. God had only spelled out ONE specific penalty in the event they would use their free wills to transgress God's instructions ... that penalty being "death". And even then, God had only spelled out what that penalty would be ... God had not spelled out when He would exact this penalty from transgressors. The expression "in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17) was not a reference to the day when Adam would die; it was a reference to the fact that IF Adam sinned, THEN ON THAT DAY IT WOULD BE DECIDED THAT HE AND ALL HIS DESCENDANTS WOULD HAVE TO GO THROUGH THE PROCESS OF DEATH!

How God handled the penalty in this situation is revealing. Adam sinned and then he still lived another 930 years (Genesis 5:5). And then he died! The penalty God had predicted came 930 years after Adam had eaten of that tree.

And as the years and centuries and millennia of human existence unfolded, so God learned about us human beings. Initially God had not really anticipated JUST HOW PERVERSE we human beings are!

And so "in good faith" God had given human beings a lifespan of just under 1000 years. But because humanity was so perverse and so hostile to its Creator, God decided to destroy all but eight human beings by means of a worldwide flood. God had NOT planned such a flood when He had created Adam and Eve ... but man's "free will" had just gotten so far out of hand that God decided to start all over again with just four men and four women. God was putting "option #1" discussed above into effect.

To limit man's contrary conduct somewhat, God also halved man's lifespan after the flood. Apart from those born before the flood (i.e. Noah and Shem), man now lived to just under 500 years. Because of man's continued perverse disobedience, God again halved man's lifespan after the "tower of Babel" incident to just under 250 years, and from the time of the exodus onwards it was halved again to just under 125 years (speaking in general terms without focussing on isolated exceptions). By the time of the kings in Israel it had been cut one more time, to around 80 years (speaking in very general terms), which is still the case today.

During the time of the exodus God again came close to putting "option #1" into effect regarding His dealings with Israel ... when God expressed His intention to destroy all the Israelites and to start all over again through Moses (contemplating a parallel to what He had done at the time of Noah). Through the intercession of Moses God did NOT put this intention into effect; instead He continued to work with Israel. However, several centuries earlier God HAD put "option #1" into effect in dealing with Sodom and Gomorrah.

What we need to understand is this:

Apart from spelling out the ultimate death penalty for disobedience, God did NOT start out with a whole range of penalties for a whole range of transgressions. IN MOST CASES God allowed transgressors to continue living in their wrong ways for quite a while after they had disobeyed God's instructions. Then, if a particular form of disobedience became "entrenched", THEN God either gave laws to totally outlaw that form of disobedience, or God gave laws that at least "regulated and contained" that wrong form of conduct for a period of time ... with the understanding that God at a later time could STILL "totally outlaw that form of disobedience".

This is important to understand.

Once the path had been set that humanity would live in opposition to God and structure its societies in selfish ways that would go against God's intentions, then God "allowed" people to continue with some of these wrong and selfish ways, but set limits and parameters to "contain" these wrong ways. This included things like "slavery" and "polygamy". This was for people who, as God said in Deuteronomy, "just didn't have the heart" to faithfully put into practice all of God's intentions for mankind.

Once God had made His Holy Spirit available, enabling members of His Church to have His laws written in their hearts and minds, THEN God also expects us to live by "THE INTENT" of all of His laws. If we are willing to seek God earnestly and zealously, THEN God's Spirit empowers us to understand God's thoughts and God's intentions. And then we are empowered to earnestly strive to live our lives by the principle of "YOUR WILL BE DONE IN MY LIFE, as it is being done in heaven" (the principle of Matthew 6:10), seeking to diligently do our part in this process. God does not really want US to claim access to the laws that He gave to carnal Israel which only served the purpose of "CONTAINING THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS OF HIS INTENTIONS". In other words, the laws that God gave to make allowance for "the hardness of their hearts" are NOT laws that people who have God's Spirit dwelling in their minds can appeal to.

## THE EXAMPLE OF SLAVERY

We should understand that whether or not God had "outlawed" slavery at the time of Moses doesn't really make a difference in the long run in a society of carnal people. As long as society consists of carnal people, there will ALWAYS be the rich and the powerful ones and the clever ones who will in some way exploit the services of the poor and the weak and the people with less ability to produce and accomplish. There will always be those who will say: "MY TIME IS WORTH MUCH MORE THAN YOUR TIME", with the consequence that they want others to serve them for less rewards than they themselves would demand for the same amount of time.

So in biblical times people had slaves. Slaves were at the very bottom of the economic ladder. All their owners provided for them in return for their services was "food and clothing and housing". Owners might also provide a slave with a wife, so that the children produced by the slave and his wife would be "additional slaves". Since in many cases such slaves were unable to produce enough income on their own (had they been free) to provide for their own food and clothing and housing, this arrangement at least guaranteed them an existence.

Today we understand that slavery is wrong, and so we officially don't condone it. HOWEVER, the problem that a very large number of people still are not capable of producing enough of an income (especially in third world countries as is very evident here in Africa) to really live on still exists. Today we don't have slaves; today we only have "employees". But in third world countries with large numbers of unskilled people those "employees" will always struggle to just earn enough of an income to live. And if they were to lose the job that they have, they would be in dire straits. Since they are not "slaves" literally, therefore their "employer" does not provide food and clothing and housing for them. Instead "the wage" or "the salary" they earn must take care of all these needs. IN PRACTICAL TERMS many such "workers" or "employees" at the bottom of the economic ladder are not any better off than were "the slaves" in biblical times. The words of an old song about someone working in a mine come to mind. It went something like this:

"Sixteen tons and what do you get?

Another day older and deeper in debt."

Those miners for whom the above words were true really were "SLAVES", because there was no way that most of them would have found any other work to earn a lowly income. So they were tied to their jobs in the mines, even though legally they could have walked away.

Are such "free workers" or "free employees" REALLY better off than slaves? I mean, are they better off IN THE SIGHT OF GOD? If God in the days of Moses had already "outlawed" slavery, would He not also have had to outlaw our system of employing the lowest-paid workers?

Of course, in some instances slaves were subject to severe and extreme abuse, being forced to work until they dropped dead. That isn't really so far removed from some people who work in underground mines and in any number of hazardous industries, ruining their health until they die "on the job" ... or often within five years of leaving their employment.

Now don't misunderstand. I am NOT in favour of slavery by any means. The whole concept of slavery is totally contrary to God's intentions. But the system WE have devised isn't really any better in the sight of God! God's ORIGINAL intention was that there would be no such thing as "money"! And God is going to get back to that point where human lives will no longer revolve around "the ability to earn money" ... see Scriptures like Isaiah 55:1-2.

So would it really have made the plight of the poorest of the poor any better if God had already in the days of Moses outlawed slavery? Or would carnal human beings not simply have devised ways to get

around such a restriction, as we are doing today in our societies? Seen from God's point of view, is our modern system really "BETTER" than a humanely applied form of slavery, which incorporates a genuine concern for the well-being of the slaves (e.g. slave owners like Abraham or Boaz, etc.)?

### THE EXAMPLE OF POLYGAMY

In Old Testament times polygamy was accepted. In practical terms polygamy was only possible for wealthy men. And while polygamy was permitted in Israel, the vast majority of the population was not involved in polygamous relationships. Most Israelite men married only one wife. But wealthy men and kings and princes could afford to have more than one wife.

Today we understand that polygamy is wrong and in western societies it is generally outlawed. But that doesn't prevent wealthy and influential men from having more than one wife, does it? If a man is wealthy or famous, then it is fairly common for him to work his way through a succession of wives. True, he may not have all of them at the same time; but he nevertheless manages to go through three or four or more wives (without being widowed at any point). And many women, especially if they are rich or famous, likewise manage to go through three or four or more different husbands, not unlike the Samaritan woman at the well who had had five husbands before living with number six without bothering to marry him (see John 4:17-18).

So while we may have a law against polygamy, that doesn't really stop those who are so inclined from having more than one husband or more than one wife. People just have to go about it slightly differently than they would have done in biblical times. So would it really have helped, in a society of carnal people, for God to already outlaw polygamy in the days of Moses? Is what some people do today REALLY different in the eyes of God from what happened during biblical times when polygamy was allowed? What's the point of introducing restrictions for carnal minds, when all those carnal minds are going to do is think of ways to get around those restrictions? What's the point of outlawing one particular way of breaking a law, when all that will achieve is that people look for a new and different way to break that law ... speaking in the context of carnal societies?

So is our modern practice of the rich and the famous going through a succession of wives or husbands really any less wrong in the sight of God than polygamy?

And obviously, whether God would have outlawed polygamy or whether He allowed it ... in a carnal society NEITHER OPTION would have ensured that people don't engage in pre-marital sex and in extra-marital sex. With all of the loose and immoral conduct that is so prevalent and pervasive in our modern societies today IT WOULD PROBABLY BE A FAR LESSER EVIL BEFORE GOD IF ALL SEXUAL CONTACTS WERE STRICTLY LIMITED TO WITHIN POLYGAMOUS LIFE-LONG MARRIAGES! That would at least put all prostitutes out of business! And it would eliminate all "affairs" and "flings" and "sowing wild oats", etc.! It would also eliminate all homosexuality and all lesbianism!

When viewed in the context of our perverse and immoral societies today, I dare say that we would still be better off if all sexual contacts were limited to either monogamous marriage relationships or to polygamous marriage relationships, rather than putting up with the moral mess we have today. This is not intended to in any way support polygamy; it is just that the abolition of polygamy didn't really solve anything, from a moral perspective.

So would Israel have been better off if God had outlawed polygamy in the days of Moses? I doubt it.

Seen from God's point of view, if you are dealing with a carnal society, then you will ALWAYS have any number of ways in which the people in that society will break the laws of God, otherwise they wouldn't be "carnal"! As long as a society is composed of carnal human beings it is impossible to eliminate ALL

transgressions of God's laws and God's purposes.

I suspect that when God, for a period of time, PUT UP WITH certain violations of His original intentions, this was because God could foresee that such "putting up with things that were not really right" prevented societies from sinking into far greater moral and sexual problems. Polygamy is probably the lesser of the two evils ... as evidenced by Muslim countries which allow a man to have several wives, and where those countries have FAR LESS IMMORALITY AND PERVERSION than we do in our western societies that outlaw polygamy. This is not intended to in any way endorse polygamy ... but it very likely IS "the lesser of the two evils" when seen from God's perspective?

So here is the point to consider:

Where God in Old Testament times actually "allowed" something that we today understand is wrong, a careful examination will reveal that such "allowances" for a carnal people avoided FAR GREATER PROBLEMS, which would almost inevitably have arisen as a result of strict prohibitions of every form of conduct that violates God's original intentions ... because the carnal mind ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS seeks to find ways around official "prohibitions". And some of those ways "around the prohibitions" are likely to be more damaging than it would be if there was no prohibition of that particular issue (e.g. polygamy and slavery), but only some laws that "regulated and contained" that particular wrong practice within "reasonable" parameters.

This is not to say that "things which are wrong are somehow right" ... they are not! They are still wrong! And when such wrong practices are implemented (e.g. when a man DOES engage in polygamy) then it ALWAYS brings penalties along with it.

This is extremely important to understand!

While God "allowed" Israel to engage in certain wrong forms of conduct, God did NOT remove the automatic penalties which such wrong conduct incurs. The penalties ALWAYS came, even though God may have "allowed" polygamy and slavery, etc.. Such wrong practices NEVER produced the fruits that God had initially wanted to see produced in the lives of people.

Some examples:

- 1) Abraham having children by different women DID cause problems and strife between Sarah and Hagar, and their respective descendants.
- 2) Jacob's life with his four wives also brought penalties with it.
- 3) The father of the prophet Samuel had two wives (1 Samuel 1:2) and the two wives were "adversaries", and Hannah suffered much stress from the other wife.
- 4) David's many wives resulted in numerous family problems for David.
- 5) Solomon's many wives turned his heart away from the true God to pagan gods (1 Kings 11:4). etc..

It reminds me of the pagan prophet Balaam. Even though he knew that God did not want him to go to king Balak, yet he really WANTED to go. So God told Balaam what he wanted to hear. God told him: "go with them" (Numbers 22:20) ... AND THEN GOD PUNISHED BALAAM. It is the same with things like polygamy, etc.. When people WANT approval for doing something that is wrong, then SOMETIMES God may actually "give that approval" ... AND THEN GOD PUNISHES FOR THE TRANSGRESSION.

Think about Jeremiah 17:10, which says ...

I the LORD search the heart, / I try the reins, EVEN TO GIVE EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS WAYS, *and* according to the fruit of his doings. (Jeremiah 17:10 AV)

Sometimes God actually GIVES people what they want ... and then punishes them for the wrong things they wanted. A Scripture that comes to mind in this regard is 2 Samuel 12:8, where God said to David ...

And I GAVE thee thy master's house, and THY MASTER'S WIVES INTO THY BOSOM, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and IF *THAT HAD BEEN TOO LITTLE*, I WOULD MOREOVER HAVE GIVEN UNTO THEE SUCH AND SUCH THINGS. (2 Samuel 12:8 AV)

God "gave" David the wives of king Saul, but that also compounded David's domestic problems. Having more wives didn't in any way make David's life easier or more pleasant ... and it certainly didn't make life more pleasant for the women who were ALREADY David's wives at that point in time. Whenever David took on another wife, it NEVER made life more pleasant for the wives he already had.

So don't mistake God's "allowance" of some things in Old Testament times for those things then somehow being "without penalties for transgression". The penalties in hurt lives were NEVER removed for the wrong practices God may have allowed.

Let's understand what Jesus Christ explained.

#### HOW JESUS CHRIST EXPLAINED THIS MATTER

The Pharisees came to Jesus Christ and asked if it is acceptable to get divorced (Matthew 19:3). Without directly saying "yes" or "no" Jesus Christ pointed to God's ORIGINAL INTENTIONS (verses 4-6), which carry the message: "No, God does not really want divorce". As is typical of the carnal mind, the Pharisees then immediately wanted to get around the answer Jesus Christ had given ... their response makes very clear that they clearly understood that Jesus Christ had said: "divorce is not right before God".

So the Pharisees then asked why Moses allowed for divorce (verse 7). They wanted to find a way around Christ's clear response. Jesus Christ then explained ...

He saith unto them, Moses BECAUSE OF THE HARDNESS OF YOUR HEARTS suffered you to put away your wives: but FROM THE BEGINNING IT WAS NOT SO. (Matthew 19:8 AV)

The point is that ALL of the laws that "allowed" some things that were not really what God desired or intended for mankind (i.e. slavery, polygamy, divorce, etc.) were given BECAUSE OF THE CARNAL ATTITUDES OF THE PEOPLE ... because of "the hardness of their hearts". This is a principle that applies not only to God allowing divorce, but it applies to everything that God may have "allowed" in Old Testament times, and which we today can understand does not really reflect God's wishes and intentions.

However, if we are serious about wanting to live our lives as God would want us to do, then we have a firm responsibility to seek out for every area of life "what God really INTENDED from the beginning". It is not really good enough to stay with what God "may have allowed at a later stage because of the hardness of people's hearts". We too have to go back to what God really intended "from the beginning".

So hopefully we can understand WHY God allowed some things that we today can see are not really right before God. Hopefully we can also see that such "allowances" never in any way removed the penalties that are attached to such wrong ways of living. The penalties remained in force even when God did "allow" certain things.

It is the same thing as God "allowing" Adam to live another 930 years after he had eaten the forbidden fruit. Without in any way removing the penalties involved, God chose to not focus on certain transgressions at certain times to avoid "greater problems" within human societies, problems which would assuredly have arisen had God imposed strict prohibitions for those things. And it is the same principle as God "allowing" people who regularly break His weekly Sabbath days to continue living in spite of such transgressions.

So polygamy and slavery have always been contrary to God's original purposes, even though God allowed these things for a while.

Frank W. Nelte