

Text: Genesis 18:16-19:38

Title: Sodom and Gomorrah

Truth: In wrath toward sinners, God remembered mercy toward Lot.

Date/Location: Sunday January 15, 2023 at FBC (rev. from 2/19/2006)

Introduction

This passage falls naturally into five sections. God reveals to Abraham his plans to judge Sodom for its sin, Abraham intercedes for the righteous people living there, and then two angels go to Sodom and survey the situation and rescue Lot and his two daughters. Lot's life post-Sodom was a mess.

Note that in remembering mercy toward Lot, God was honoring His servant Abraham and the covenant that He had made with Abraham.

I. God's Plan for Sodom, 18:16-21

- A. God's plan is to go to Sodom and Gomorrah and see if the wickedness He "heard about" was true. "Their sin is very grave." We will see just how grave in the next section.
- B. Abraham was privileged to be "in the know" about God's plans with respect to Sodom and Gomorrah. God's rationale for this was that Abraham would become a great nation, and all other nations would be blessed in him. This is a restatement of the Abrahamic covenant. The act of judgment that God is about to unleash on these wicked cities does influence Abraham in this sense. It is also relevant to Abraham because his nephew Lot lives in Sodom. This is an example of a more general principle, that God reveals His plan to His servants, particularly the prophets (Amos 3:7) as well as His friends (John 15:15). We are deeply privileged to be "in the know" on what God is doing in the world.
- C. Notice that in verse 19 God says that He has *known* Abraham. Similarly, it is important that God knows us as well, in a salvific sense. Mat. 7:23, 1 Cor. 8:3, Gal. 4:9, and John 6:67-70 refer to this idea. God's knowledge of Abraham (and us) is purposeful. The goal is that Abraham may teach his descendants to keep God's ways, to

do righteousness and justice, and that the Lord may fulfill the covenant toward Abraham. A parallel notion applies to us. God saves us to redeem us from iniquity and purify us so that we energetically pursue every good work.

- D. It is interesting that God is going to “check out” the situation in more detail (20-21), even though He already knows everything! See Prov. 18:13: even God does not “answer the matter before he hears it.”

II. Abraham’s Intercession, 18:22-33

- A. In the remainder of the chapter, Abraham intercedes for the wicked cities by asking if there are a certain number of righteous people living there, that God would not destroy it. In these verses is one of the classic statements about God’s justice. Verse 25 says, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” The answer is “Of course He will!” Abraham’s point is that God would not slay the righteous along with the wicked. We too are absolutely assured that whatever God does, it is right. **This principle covers all those times when we find it difficult or impossible to understand God’s ways.** He has everything arranged properly in the big picture which only He can know and understand. You cannot see it (yet). But God does, and He always does right, even if things seem out of control. And God is righteous—there is no shortcoming of holiness or sin in His being or behavior. Nothing He does is wrong. There is no darkness in Him. Because of this, we can *trust* Him entirely.
- B. Sometimes God does permit righteous people to die, for reasons well-known to Him, however enigmatic it may seem to us. Many other times, God spares the wicked for the sake of the righteous, even though there are far fewer righteous than wicked. He extends such mercy also because there are many clueless people. It does not take a sophisticated theologian to figure out that God has been patient with our nation. I thank Him for His mercy because our nation, and many others on the planet, richly deserve a whole lot of retribution for the evil we do.
- C. Notice Abraham’s boldness in making these requests. He “came near” (v. 23). This is Abraham’s intercessory prayer, but it hardly

seems like “prayer” in the sense that he is face to face with God, talking to Him! Prayer seems more “remote” today, yet it need not be any less effective because when praying to the Christian God, you are talking to the same God Abraham was! The active prayer of a righteous person accomplishes a great deal (James 5:16). “How does it do that?” you ask. That question is above your pay grade. What we can glean from the Bible indicates that God sovereignly pre-planned that your prayer would be part of His plan. So just pray!

- D. Abraham started by asking if there were 50 righteous people in Sodom, that God would not destroy it. God responds positively to that request. Abraham went from 50 to 45, to 40, to 30, to 20, and finally to 10. What boldness! We can do the same (Heb. 4:16) on grounds far beyond what Abraham knew (the access provided by Jesus Christ).
- E. The sad thing was that God did not find 10 righteous people in the city. He found Lot, Lot’s wife, and their two daughters. The others refused to leave the doomed city.

III. Angels Come to Lot and Urge Him to Leave Sodom, 19:1-14

- A. The Bible tells us that there were three men who came to see Abraham (18:2). One was the LORD (18:22). The other two who left Abraham were angels. So said Moses in 19:1. But Moses also identified them as men (19:10) because that is the form they took to present themselves to humans. Their mission would not have worked had they come in as shining, winged creatures. Pay attention to when the Bible uses the language of appearance. These angels appeared to be men but were really angels. This is certainly not misleading since the text plainly tells us that they are angels.
- B. When they arrived, Lot was sitting in the gate of the city. This means that he was one of the ‘elders’ of the city, one of its judges (19:9). Whether it was his goal to reform the city or not, 2 Peter 2:7-8 tells us that he was righteous, but was extremely distressed by the wicked, sensual conduct all around him. He tormented himself in this way since he could have relocated to get away from

the sin. “Being around this is bad for me—I need to move.” That may be a step necessary in your own life. His torment, however, likely had another angle to it. “Those people doing that is deadly for them. They are going to face God’s judgment.” That thought *should* torment them.

- C. Like his uncle Abraham (18:2-8), Lot was a hospitable person (Heb. 13:2). Also, he wanted to ensure the safety of the men who had come into the city. He knew the wickedness of the city and what would happen to the men (he thought they were real men at this point) if they stayed out in the city square all night (19:1-3). That he was protecting from potential harm is evident in 19:8 where Lot says, “do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under...my roof.”
- D. The wickedness of the city becomes evident in 19:4-9. The whole city was given over to homosexuality. Some have tried to undermine this accusation by saying that the men of Sodom were merely *inhospitable*, or some other far-fetched thing. Jude 7 is crystal clear that their sin was sexual immorality. The fact of the matter is that they were serial homosexuals. Probably lots of other sins were rampant in that city as well. The Bible is *very clear* that homosexuality is a sin—and not just promiscuous homosexuality (Lev. 18:22, 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:9-10).
- E. In the heat of the moment, Lot began to act in a very unprincipled way: he offered his two virgin daughters to the crowd to appease their sensual desires. How shameful!
- F. The two angel-men saved Lot’s life from the wicked men of the city (19:10). This was the first of two times that they saved his life (see the next section).

IV. Angels Drag Lot out of Sodom and the City is Destroyed,

19:15-29

- A. It seems strange that so much urging would be necessary on the part of the angels to get Lot and his family to understand the need to leave this city, particularly after the miracle of the blinding of the men of the city, and their oracle that the city would be

destroyed. Change is hard to accept, I guess. Or people do not easily believe that calamity is coming because they have heard false predictions so many times before. It seemed to be a joke.

The calamity of sin will come upon every human being, yet sin blinds us to its presence and thus hides from our eyes. We do not see the problem; we do not *want* to see it. We do not accept it. But God is telling us in advance to repent or else we perish.

- B. The angels offered salvation from the destruction of the city to Lot, his wife, his two virgin daughters (19:8, 15-16), and at least two other daughters who had married Lot's sons-in-law (v. 14). If Lot had four daughters altogether, then there was a total of 8 people that were told to leave the city. Only four accepted the offer, and that only after the angels dragged them out of the city (19:16-17). The text says that the LORD was merciful to Lot. How true it is that God is merciful to us as well!
- C. Lot complained that to go to the mountains was too dangerous. He wanted to go to the city called Zoar. It is ironic that later we find Lot living in the mountains (19:30).
- D. At verse 27, the scene changes. Now Abraham saw the cities in the plain below his vantage point where he had spoken with the LORD the day before. Abraham saw the smoke of the cities. Verse 29 comments that God remembered Abraham. How so? Well, He was merciful to Lot (19:16) on account of the prayer of Abraham in 18:23-33. What an encouragement to intercede for others! Who knows but that *your* prayer saved someone from calamity that they never envisioned, and never experienced it, so they did not know to thank God for deliverance!

V. Immorality in Lot's Family, 19:30-38

- A. Lot's two daughters were impatient for husbands, and they wanted to preserve the lineage of their father. Any sons that Lot had were killed in Sodom (the angels mention sons in 19:12, though we are not told if there were any). So, they resorted to incest. Here is a good illustration of why it is important to avoid alcohol altogether—it leads to other serious sins.

B. The law of sowing and reaping applies too. Their sin resulted in the Moabites and Ammonites, future adversaries of the nation of Israel. In Deut. 2:9, 19 God told Israel to let these nations alone as they began to possess the promised land. Numbers 22–25 records how the Moabites devised schemes against the children of Israel to get God to curse them. People from Moab and Ammon were disallowed from entering the congregation of Israel because they did not treat Israel kindly (Deut. 23:3-4). Yet Ruth the Moabitess is a key member of the Jewish family and lineage of Messiah. She placed her faith in the God of the Bible, while turning away from the idolatrous worship of her Moabite past.

Conclusion

Here are some wise principles: Avoid drunkenness because it is often associated with immorality. Do not hesitate to leave an evil situation, like Lot should have. Show true and protective hospitality like Lot did. Be boldly insistent in intercessory prayer like Abraham. Intercede for God's mercy on the *saved* as well as his longsuffering toward the *lost*. Be diligent to know God and be known by Him.

Is the sin named after the title city in this section the worst of the worst? Not by a long shot. Such a lifestyle is sinful, but a person involved in it can turn away from it (repent) and believe in Jesus. The result? God will completely forgive that person and wash them as clean as can be. Rejecting Christ is a far more serious sin, for there is no other rescue from that. And note this: Matthew 10:12-15 and 11:23-24 tell of sins that will receive a *worse* judgment than Sodom. What are those sins? In the first case, it consists of not welcoming the disciples of the Lord and not listening to their words. This consists of rejecting the Christian message and messengers. In the second case, it is that the Lord Jesus did mighty works authenticating His identity and ministry in Capernaum. Rejecting Jesus, who was clearly sent from God, is worse than the sins of Sodom. God expects that you will receive His gracious gift of revealing Himself whether through miraculous works, Biblical words, or Christian workers.