

Ministry of Grace

Lesson 9 – The Wrath of God

Genesis 19:1-38

¹The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth ²and said, "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way."

They said, "No; we will spend the night in the town square." ³But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

⁴But 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. ⁵And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them."

⁶Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, ⁷and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. ⁸Behold, 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."

⁹But 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.

¹⁰But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door. ¹¹And 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.

¹²Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. ¹³For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it."

¹⁴So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, "Up! Get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city." But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

¹⁵As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city." ¹⁶But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.

¹⁷And as they brought them out, one said, "Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away."

¹⁸And Lot said to them, "Oh, no, my lords. ¹⁹Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life. But I cannot escape to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I die. ²⁰Behold, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there--is it not a little one?--and my life will be saved!"

²¹He said to him, "Behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. ²²Escape there quickly, for I can do nothing till you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

²³The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar. ²⁴Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven. ²⁵And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. ²⁶But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

²⁷And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. ²⁸And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace. ²⁹So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.

³⁰Now Lot went up out of Zoar and lived in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to live in Zoar. So he lived in a cave with his two daughters. ³¹And the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the earth. ³²Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father."

³³So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father. He did not know when she lay down or when she arose. ³⁴The next day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father. Let us make him drink wine tonight also. Then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father."

³⁵So they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. ³⁶Thus both the daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father. ³⁷The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day. ³⁸The younger also bore a son and called his name Ben-ammi. He is the father of the Ammonites to this day.

Synopsis

The scene now shifts from Abraham's camp at the Oak Grove of Mamre to the city of Sodom. Lot, who has now become one of the leaders of the city, was sitting at the gate, perhaps with other important people of Sodom. As the two strangers entered the city, Lot approached them and invited them to come spend the night under his roof. Obviously, he knew what kind of abuse they would suffer if they were to sleep in the town square, so when they initially refused his offer, he urged them strongly until they agreed to join him.

That evening, as Lot and his guests were about to retire for the night, the men of the city surrounded Lot's house and demanded that the two strangers be brought out so that they could abuse them sexually. And, it was not just a few of the men of Sodom but, according to the text, it was **"the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man"**

Next, we see how corrupt Lot's morals had become, because in order to save the two strangers he offered his own two daughters to be abused by the men of Sodom. However, because of their homosexual lust, the men of the city refused Lot's offer and threatened to enter Lot's house and take the two strangers by force. But, the two angels intervened, rescuing Lot and striking the men with blindness and confusion.

The next morning, the angels took Lot, his wife, and his two daughters by the hand and dragged them out of the wicked city, instructing them to run for their lives and not look back because God was about to destroy Sodom and all the cities of the plain. After agreeing to let Lot and his family flee to the little town of Zoar, the angels executed God's judgment of Sodom, Gomorrah, Zeboiim, and Admah, but as Lot and his family were fleeing, his wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt.

Having decided not to remain in Zoar, Lot and his two daughters headed into the nearby mountains where they lived in a cave. Possibly believing that God had destroyed the entire world, Lot's two daughters conspired to get their father drunk and have sexual relations with him so that they could get pregnant. As a result, they each gave birth to a son. These two are the fathers of the Moabites and the Ammonites, who have been a perpetual thorn in the side to the Israelites even to this day.

Genesis 19:1-3

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth and said, "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the town square." But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

"The two angels" – Although we are not told so explicitly, the fact that it refers to them as "the" two angels indicates they were the two angels who accompanied Yahweh in the previous chapter. They had been with Abraham earlier that same day.

"Lot was sitting in the gate" – Back in Genesis chapter thirteen we learned that Abram and Lot separated and Lot moved to the well-watered plain of the Jordan valley. There he pitched his tent in the vicinity of Sodom:

Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. (**Genesis 13:12**)

That occurred about twenty-one years earlier. Since then, Lot has moved into the city and it appears that he has taken a position of prominence in Sodom.

“gate” – The gate (area) was an arched entrance with deep recesses and seats on either side. It was a place of meeting in the ancient towns of the East, where the inhabitants assembled either for social contact or to transact public business. Typically, the people sitting in the gate were the leaders of the city. Here are a couple of examples from elsewhere in the Bible:

So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, (**Genesis 34:20**)

then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, (**Deuteronomy 21:19**)

“When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth” – This is the same kind of greeting with which Abraham had greeted his guests earlier in the day.

“please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night” – Lot, like his uncle, demonstrated hospitality to the two angels, although he didn't yet know them to be angels. In a few verses we will see how Lot's morals have been corrupted by the people of Sodom. This scene, however, shows that he still had a level of civility toward strangers.

“and wash your feet” – Again, this is similar to the way Abraham treated his guests.

“No; we will spend the night in the town square.” – Although Lot had offered to put the guests up for the night, the two angels declined his offer.

“he pressed them strongly” – Hebrew *pasar meh-ode*, meaning “he urged them vehemently.” Lot knew the kind of people who lived in this wicked city and would not willingly allow any strangers to be subject to the abuse they would receive if they slept in the street.

“he made them a feast” – These had to be some of the best fed angels anywhere. This is now the second time in one day that they have had a feast prepared for them.

Genesis 19:4-8

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. And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. 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."

“before they lay down” – This following event took place in the evening.

“both young and old, all the people to the last man” – The homosexual lust of the city seems to have affected every male in the city except Lot.

“surrounded the house” – This is an indication of the large number of men who were caught up in this sin.

“Where are the men who came to you tonight” - Apparently Lot had not been alone sitting in the gate of the city when the angels first arrived in Sodom. Someone has spread the news about the arrival of two strangers and that they were staying with Lot.

“Bring them out to us that we may know them” – There is no room for doubt regarding the intentions of these men. The Hebrew word translated “know” is *yada*, meaning “to know experientially, relationally, or intimately.” It is the same word used of Adam and Eve:

Now Adam **knew** Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." (Genesis 4:1)

It should be noted that homosexual lust was not the only problem with these people. According to Ezekiel they were also guilty of overindulging in food, they seemed more interested in activities of pleasure than they were in work, they were selfish (not caring about the needs of the poor and needy), and they were proud. This sounds like a description of a typical person in our society today, doesn't it?

Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it. (Ezekiel 16:49-50)

“Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him” – Lot knew what type of men these were and he apparently did not want anyone inside his house to hear what he said to them.

“I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly” – Lot treated the men of the city cordially, in spite of their wicked intentions. Because he had lived with these people for years, Lot even addressed them as “brothers.”

“I have two daughters ... do to them as you please.” – In spite of the fact that Lot still had enough social graces to tend to the needs of strangers, he had become prominent in the city and had learned the “ways” of Sodom. His own morals had become so corrupted that he was willing to make an outrageous offer to the men of the city. When he initially moved into the city of Sodom, Lot may have intended to be a witness of righteousness to the people of the city, but instead, they had corrupted Lot's morals. This is what Paul told the Corinthians:

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." (1 Corinthians 15:33)

Not only had Lot **not** been a witness of righteousness to the people of Sodom, the people of Sodom **had** been a bad influence on him!

“I have two daughters who have not known any man” – There is some disagreement among Biblical scholars as to whether these two daughters were married or simply engaged. Clearly, from this statement we can assume that they were still virgins (unless Lot was lying to the men of the town). In verse fourteen Lot talks to his two sons-in-law “who were to marry his daughters.” Literally, this phrase should be translated, “those taking his daughters,” which does not make a clear distinction as to whether they were in the process of marrying (they were engaged) or had already married his daughters.

Now, to add another level of uncertainty to this whole discussion, we are never told that the two daughters living with Lot were his only children. It is unlikely that he had any married sons, for he certainly would have gone and warned them if he had any. It is possible, however, that Lot had four

daughters, two of which were already married, and two of which were unmarried and still living at home. This is only conjecture, however, since there is no scriptural evidence of any other children.

“for they have come under the shelter of my roof” – The reason that Lot had invited the strangers to lodge with him for the night is because he knew what the men of the city would do to them. Thus, we see that it was Lot’s intention from the start to protect these two visitors.

Genesis 19:9-11

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

“Stand back!” – The meaning of this expression is, “move out of our way and let us get to the door.”

“This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge!” – This may be translated as “This person is a dweller (a transient, not a citizen) and in judging he will judge.” In other words, Lot was an alien, not a citizen of the city, and he was condemning them for their actions. If they let him judge them now, he would continue to judge them. This is the same kind of contemptuous attitude that the people of the world system have today regarding Christians who talk the talk but don’t walk the walk.

“Now we will deal worse with you than with them.” – After declaring among themselves the contempt they had for Lot, the men threatened to treat Lot worse than they would have treated his two visitors.

“the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house” – A supernatural act in itself, since they were able to do so without allowing the men of the city to gain access to the house.

“they struck with blindness the men who were at the entrance of the house” – Apparently more than just physical blindness. This appears to be a mental confusion as well, for the men of the city were not able to even find the door which had been right in front of them only moments earlier.

Genesis 19:12-14

Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it." So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, "Up! Get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city." But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

“Then the men said to Lot” – That is, the two angels.

“Have you anyone else here? ... bring them out of the place.” – Our merciful God was not willing to condemn the family of righteous Lot (for so Peter calls him in **2 Peter 2:7**) along with the rest of Sodom. The angels told Lot to gather together all his family and flee.

“the LORD has sent us to destroy it” – This expression makes it fairly clear that these two were angels and that neither one of them was Yahweh.

“Up! Get out of this place” – Lot went to these men in the middle of the night urging them to get out of bed and escape.

“he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting” – These two men thought that Lot was making fun of them. Perhaps, because of Lot’s denunciation of the men of Sodom earlier in the evening and their ensuing threats, these two thought that Lot was trying to “get even” with them. Or, perhaps, because Lot had demonstrated that his own morals were corrupt by having offered his two virgin daughters to the men of the city, he had completely lost his credibility with these two men.

Genesis 19:15, 16

As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city." But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.

“As morning dawned” – As soon as the sun began to rise, the angels urged Lot to get out of town fast.

“he lingered” – Even though Lot seems to have believed that the city was about to be destroyed, he hesitated in leaving. Perhaps, Lot was reluctant to leave all the possessions he had acquired. It seems he had sold all his cattle and had put his money into “hard goods,” like his house, clothing, and other possessions. He was now being urged to walk away from **all** of it.

“the men seized him ... by the hand” – The angels seemed determined to get Lot and his wife and daughters out of the city. They knew what was about to happen and it was incumbent upon them to ensure that Lot and his family were not there when the cities were destroyed.

Genesis 19:17-20

And as they brought them out, one said, "Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away." And Lot said to them, "Oh, no, my lords. Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life. But I cannot escape to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I die. Behold, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there--is it not a little one?--and my life will be saved!"

“as they brought them out” – That is, outside the city, not outside the house.

“Do not look back” – There is no explanation as to why they were not to look behind them. We do know that Lot’s wife looked back and she was turned into a pillar of salt.

“or stop anywhere in the valley” – this is an indication that God intended to destroy all five cities of the plain. In fact, in **Deuteronomy 29:23**, we see that all the cities of this area (except Zoar) were destroyed.

the whole land burned out with brimstone and salt, nothing sown and nothing growing, where no plant can sprout, an overthrow like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger and wrath (**Deuteronomy 29:23**)

“I cannot escape to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me” – Lot had been living with the wickedness of Sodom for so long that he had forgotten how to walk by faith. Instead of trusting Yahweh to help him escape, Lot was so focused on himself that he became afraid.

“Behold, this city is near enough to flee to” – Apparently, Bela (Zoar) was the closest to Sodom and smallest of all the cities of the plain.

“is it not a little one?” – Apparently, Lot’s logic considered the fact that since Bela (Zoar) was small, there weren’t very many wicked people there compared to the other four cities of the plain, so God could still destroy most of the sinners even if he left the inhabitants of Bela alive.

Genesis 19:21, 22

He said to him, "Behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. Escape there quickly, for I can do nothing till you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

“I can do nothing till you arrive there” – In spite of Lot’s self-centered faith, God had determined to save him from the destruction and, therefore, delayed His action against the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah until Lot was safe.

“Zoar” – The Hebrew word *Tsoar* means “little.” This city was formerly called Bela. This is one of the five cities of the plain who were defeated by Chedorlaomer:

these kings made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). (Genesis 14:2)

Genesis 19:23-26

The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar. Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

“The sun had risen ... when Lot came to Zoar” – Lot left Sodom just before sunrise. The sun had fully risen when he reached Bela (Zoar). His trip was probably two to three hours which indicates that Bela was probably three to five miles away from Sodom.

“the LORD rained ... sulfur and fire” – Sulfur (brimstone) is the Hebrew word *gophriyth*, which refers to “cypress resin” or “sulphur.” The word translated “fire” is *es*, meaning “fire” or “burning.” Thus we can conclude that burning sulphurous material rained down from the sky. This would have set on fire anything that was flammable and it would have burned all the crops. This was not simply a lightning storm that struck the earth and set the slime pits filled with tar on fire, as some have speculated. This was a supernatural event in which burning material fell from the sky and burned everything around.

Fire and brimstone (sulphur) are the terms used in the New Testament to describe eternal Hell (the lake of fire) in the book of Revelation:

and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:10)

It is as if God brought the judgment of eternal Hell upon the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah from on high. In essence, Hell rained down out of Heaven.

“on Sodom and Gomorrah” – Not just on these two cities, for according to what Moses wrote in the book of Deuteronomy:

the whole land burned out with brimstone and salt, nothing sown and nothing growing, where no plant can sprout, an overthrow like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger and wrath-- (Deuteronomy 29:23)

Thus we see that all five cities of the plain were destined for destruction, but because of Lot’s plea, the city of Bela (Zoar) was spared.

“Lot’s wife ... looked back” – Apparently, the judgment of the four cities began just before Lot and his family got within the gates of Zoar. Unable to contain her curiosity (in spite of the angelic warning), Lot’s wife turned around and was judged immediately.

Genesis 19:27-29

And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace. So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.

“to the place where he had stood before the LORD” – This is the place near Hebron, overlooking the Jordan Valley, where Abraham had negotiated with God for the righteous people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

“and toward all the land of the valley” – This is further evidence that God destroyed four cities of the valley.

“God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow” – From this it appears that there was only **one** righteous person living in all the cities of the plain.

Genesis 19:30-31

Now Lot went up out of Zoar and lived in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to live in Zoar. So he lived in a cave with his two daughters. And the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the earth.

“Lot went up out of Zoar and lived in the hills” – The mountain country is the place to which the angels initially told Lot to flee, but Lot argued that he couldn’t go there “lest some evil overtake me.” Now that four of the cities of the plain are destroyed, he flees there. Perhaps the residents of Zoar recognized him as an important person of Sodom and wanted to know why he was not destroyed. Or, perhaps someone who was present at the altercation outside Lot’s house the previous night, having left the city that night before it was destroyed, informed the people of Zoar concerning Lot’s unwillingness to cooperate. It is also possible that in the ensuing months and years the waters of the dead sea began to encroach upon Zoar and everyone in the city was forced to flee. Whatever the reason, Lot chose to leave Zoar and live in the hill country.

“he lived in a cave with his two daughters” – All that remained of Lot’s great possessions in Sodom were his two virgin daughters whom he had so willingly offered to the wicked men of Sodom. He didn’t even have a place to live, being forced to seek shelter in a cave.

“not a man on earth to come in to us” – These two girls may have believed that God’s judgment on the cities of the plain was His judgment on the entire world. The incestuous plan devised by these two girls was in keeping with the lack of sexual morals exhibited by the inhabitants of Sodom where these two girls grew up.

Genesis 19:32-38

Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father." So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father. He did not know when she lay down or when she arose. The next day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father. Let us make him drink wine tonight also. Then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father." So they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. Thus both the daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father. The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day. The younger also bore a son and called his name Ben-ammi. He is the father of the Ammonites to this day.

“we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father” – The morals of the two daughters had been so corrupted by living among the deviants of Sodom that they thought it a good plan to commit incest with their father. They believed that what they were doing was alright since it was for the purpose of preserving their father’s name. They were demonstrating the same lack of faith in God that Abraham and Sarah had when they took matters into their own hands.

“they made their father drink wine that night ... He did not know when she lay down or when she arose” – The effect of the alcohol was to numb Lot’s senses enough that he did not realize what he was doing with his daughters.

“The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab” – The name Moab means “from a father”

“The younger also bore a son and called his name Ben-ammi” – The name Ben-Ammi means “son of my people.”

So What?

In the World, or Of the World?

In this chapter we see the dramatic contrast between the lives of righteous Abraham and righteous Lot. Both of these men were believers and both are declared to be righteous. However, their lifestyles could hardly be more different. Abraham has grown in faith over the past twenty years. He has kept himself from the influence of the world and has separated himself to God. That’s not to say that his behavior has always been perfect, for we know what he and Sarah did fourteen years earlier when they tried to give God a little “help.” Lot, on the other hand, has not separated himself from the world; in fact, he has immersed himself in it.

For Lot, it all started when he and Abraham parted company. He observed the very desirable “well watered valley of the Jordan.” He moved there to take advantage of the prosperity that it promised and he pitched his tent in the vicinity of Sodom. Some five or six years later, when Chedorlaomer

and his armies attacked the cities of the plain, we find that Lot has enjoined himself to the people of Sodom. He had become one of them. Now, after fifteen more years, we find Lot living in the city, having forsaken the pastoral life. It even appears that he has become a prominent citizen of the city. Perhaps, his initial intentions were to be a witness for Yahweh to these people. We don't know for sure. What we do know is that by not separating himself from them, he has become one of them. In some ways, he has become just like them. He has become like the seed scattered among the thorns, in Jesus' parable of the sower:

As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. (Matthew 13:22)

We see from the examples of Abraham and Lot how important it is to spend time in fellowship with God and God's people. It is equally important not to get caught-up in the world. The things of the world are very desirable! The things of the world inflame the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. But, the things of the world do not draw us closer to God. We cannot cling to the world and cling to God at the same time. Both the Prophet Isaiah and the Apostle Paul proclaimed this message of separation from the world:

Depart, depart, go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the LORD. (Isaiah 52:11)

Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, (2 Corinthians 6:17)

Where are you living your life today? Are you caught up in the things of this world? Are your life goals and your desires centered on acquiring more worldly goods and making a name for yourself in this world? Or, are your goals and desires centered on God? Are you focusing your life on being what God wants you to be, on going where God wants you to go, and on doing what God wants you to do? In short, are you living like Abraham or like Lot?

Righteous Protection & Answered Prayers

God's protecting hand springs out of His great love for us. Neither this protection nor His love are dependent on our actions. In reading through the book of Genesis, one might get the notion that Lot was never truly saved. And yet, the Apostle Peter proclaims him to be righteous, and we learned from Genesis chapter fifteen that we don't earn righteousness; we can only receive it from God. Here's what Peter said about righteous Lot:

if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard) (2 Peter 2:6-8)

Do you see that? God proclaims that Lot was righteous! He sure doesn't act like it, does he? And, do you see what Peter says about the effect of following the ways of this world? He says, "Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked" Lot did not receive the satisfaction from the world that he thought he would. When looking on the well watered valley of the Jordan, he imagined that life would be easier, that he could acquire more "stuff," and that he would be happy. Rather than being happy, however, Lot was oppressed. The Greek word translated "oppressed" is *basanidzō*,

which means “to examine by torture;” that is, to inflict pain and torment. Lot was being tortured each and every day that he lived among the wickedness of Sodom. It must have numbed his senses and seared his conscience, for he surly knew that the way they lived was wrong. In spite of the painful daily torture, however, he could not extract himself. But God could, and did.

God sent two angels to destroy the wicked cities of the plain, but their mission also included rescuing the righteous before judging the rest. Remember the negotiation between Abraham and God? That negotiation took place after the angels had already departed. They had already received their marching orders. They already knew they were to rescue Lot before destroying the cities. Even before Abraham negotiated with Yahweh, God had determined to protect the righteous. So, are we to believe that Abraham’s prayers were unnecessary and ineffective? I don’t think so. Remember, God lives outside the sphere of time and space. He already knew, before His discussion with Abraham, that Abraham would pray for the righteous people of those cities.

I am reminded of the story of the family who got caught in a flood and depended on God to save them. When the order to evacuate first came, they told the police, “No, God will protect us.” When the flood waters rose and they were surrounded by water, a rescue boat came by and offered to take them to safety. Instead, they said, “No thanks. We believe that God will rescue us.” And, when the water was so high that they had to climb out on their roof to escape, a helicopter came by with an offer to save them. However, once again, their response was, “No, we believe that God will save us.” Unfortunately, they perished in the flood. When they appeared before God, they asked, “God, why didn’t you rescue us. We believed you would!” God’s response was, “I sent the police, a boat, and a helicopter, but you refused my help.”

That’s a nice story, and I suppose it demonstrates that God can rescue us in a number of ways, but it’s not quite how He works. You see, when God determines to rescue one of His children, he will go to extraordinary lengths to ensure they are rescued, just as He did with Lot.

How Tight is Your Grip?

Lot must have known that the two strangers were angels sent from God. Perhaps not initially, but after they pulled him in from the angry mob and struck the men of the city with blindness and confusion, he surely knew. If that wasn’t enough, these two informed Lot that they were going to destroy the place because of the outcry which had reached to Yahweh. That was a pretty clear message and Lot knew they were serious. He even spent part of the night trying to convince his sons-in-law to flee the destruction that was to come in the morning.

And yet – when morning came, Lot was reluctant to leave. God had blessed Lot because of his association with Abraham. Lot had become wealthy because God had blessed him with large flocks and herds. His current living quarters, within the walls of the city, indicates that he had divested himself of the flocks and herds and he had purchased a house in town. Given the size that his flocks and herds apparently had been (the size of his flocks is the reason he had to separate from Abraham), he may well have had one of the more opulent homes in his neighborhood. He likely had acquired a lot of “stuff.” But now, he was being instructed to leave it all behind and flee for his life. Lot’s stuff was important to him and it seems that he was hesitant to leave it all behind.

So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him

Lot's grip on his "stuff" was so tight that the Angels had to take his hand and drag him outside. And, it seems that his wife was just as reluctant to leave. In fact, she was so tied to all their "stuff" that she couldn't resist looking back just one last time.

Our Lord taught a similar lesson as he and his disciples were walking:

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

To another he said, "Follow me."

But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."

And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home."

Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:57-62)

One of the problems in living among the world is that we accumulate "stuff." Oh, there's nothing wrong with having possessions, per se. The problem is when we become attached to our "stuff." In fact, we sometimes become so attached to it that we place more importance on it than we do on God. At that point our "stuff" becomes an idol and God hates idols. Our God wants to have all of our affection and devotion. When "stuff" becomes our idol, we give our affections and attention to it instead of God.

Christ told his disciples:

No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (Luke 16:13)

So, I have to ask you, "Is there something in your life that has become your idol?" Do you have "stuff" that has become more important than God?

When my wife and I first met, I was attending Bible College. I had recently quit a high paying position as a computer programmer and had driven up from California to Oregon in my fancy little sports car. I really liked that car. It was sleek and shiny, and fun to drive! One winter day, however, I suddenly realized that I had not paid the insurance on the car and that it had lapsed on that very day. So, after classes I headed to the insurance office to pay the bill. As I was leaving the parking lot a truck was coming from my left so I put my foot on the brake to allow him to go by. As it turned out, my foot missed the brake, so I tried again to apply the brake, but my foot missed the brake pedal a second time! Meanwhile, I had drifted out into the highway and the rear bumper of the truck put a particularly nasty crease all the way across the hood of my car, the car that was temporarily uninsured! God had tarnished my idol. And I had to live with it as a constant reminder for a couple of years.

Lot had lots of "stuff," and he was reluctant to part with it when God called him to leave the wicked city. He was holding on to it so tightly that the angels had to grab his hand and pull him out. Do you like having "stuff?" Would you be willing to give it all up in order to follow God? Or, are you holding tight to what you have. Are you living among the world, or have you become part of it?

Keep in mind that when this life is over we will leave this earth and all of our “stuff” will be left behind. Then, as we appear before the Bema Seat of Christ, we will receive rewards for the things we have done for God while on this earth. The “stuff” will disappear, but the crowns will last for eternity. What’s more important to you, this earthly stuff, or eternal rewards?