

“Then Jesus answered and said to them,... ‘You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life;

And These Are They Which Testify of Me

Sermons on Genesis
Genesis 19
Able To Deliver
Sodom and Gomorrah

With Study Questions

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street #100
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 212-6999
3/11/2001*

Able To Deliver

Sodom and Gomorrah

Genesis 19

Preview

Chapter nineteen of Genesis contains the story of the infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham had previously interceded for these cities and two angels were to investigate the evil of these cities. They are met by Lot, who grants them overwhelming hospitality. The men of the city seek to sexually molest the angels, confirming the evil within the city. Orders to exit the city are given to Lot and his family. Lot will linger and actually has to be brought out of the city to safety. Lot and his family are told to leave the city and not look back. Lot's wife looks back and is turned into a pillar of salt. We will then see the effect Sodom had on Lot's daughters.

I. Points of Emphasis

Lot's Hospitality

“Now 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 he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. 2 And he said, “Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.” And they said, “No, but we will spend the night in the open square.” 3 But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate” (Genesis 19:1-3).

Lot's Choice

Lot is at the city gate, which indicates that he may have become a city official. His hospitality matches that of Abraham in the previous chapter. Lot had been wealthy. So wealthy that he and Abraham had to split company. Abraham had given Lot the choice of whatever land he desired. Lot chose land with beautiful appearance, but laden with evil, so close to Sodom. What appeared to be a good business decision, eventually destroyed his business and family.

A number of years ago a man, who had won the sales title for his company numerous times, was receiving yet another award for his

accomplishments. At the event his wife was given an opportunity to address the huge crowd at the banquet. Her only comment was, "It's not worth it."

Lot's insistence that these guests stay with him rather than the open square demonstrated a genuine sense of hospitality. How often we offer to pay the check and hope for a negative response. Lot was truly a righteous man (2 Peter 2:8).

Sodomites

"Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. 5 And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally" (Genesis 19:4,5)

If there was any doubt as to whether the outcry regarding the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was legitimate, the matter was settled here. They sought to sodomize the very angels sent to judge them.

"So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, 7 and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! 8 "See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof." 9 And they said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them." So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. 10 But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. 11 And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door" (Genesis 19:6-11).

Lot's Offer

It would seem that Lot had an over-developed sense of hospitality. Some argue that hospitality had reached that level of importance, maybe it had. Others, and I would agree with them, would argue that Lot offering his daughters was unjustified and ill-advised. Then again, perhaps Lot knew the Sodomites would have no interest in women.

Judgmental Lot

It seems they had just about had it with Lot. They accuse him of acting like a judge and threaten to deal with him worse than with the angels. Interesting it is how the ungodly and immoral feel so comfortable leveling accusations against the godly. It has become evil to judge the sin of homosexuality, but perfectly acceptable to judge the “sin” of righteous discernment. Apparently, it is only evil when that which is being judged is evil. To judge the righteous has somehow become noble.

Supporting Diversity

Words like tolerance and diversity have become flagship words for those with no genuine sense of goodness. Recently a major corporation canceled their sponsorship of a radio personality because she was openly opposed to homosexuality. A friend of mine e-mailed the corporation and questioned their decision. The response was, “we support diversity.” What about the divergent opinion of the talk-show host? Apparently they only support some diversity. Sodom was in God’s cross-hairs.

Lot Rescued

Before Lot became the object of the mob’s aggression, he’s pulled back into the house by the angels who shut the door and blind the perpetrators. There is some doubt about the nature of this blindness. It may have been partial and, or mental. Either way, it didn’t stop them from trying to find the door. They merely grew weary in their quest. It is amazing how disease and destruction are often not effective deterrents to sin. Peter writes about those who have eyes full of adultery and how they descend to a level where they **“cannot cease from sin” (2 Peter 2:14)**.

This was not the first time Lot had to be rescued, nor will it be the last. For even though Lot was a righteous man, it seems he had pretty poor judgment.

Getting Out

“Then the men said to Lot, “Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take them out of this place! 13 “For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it.” 14 So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, “Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city!” But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking” (Genesis 19:12-14).

Laughing at Judgment

Judgment day approaches. Lot makes an appeal to those closest to him. These were, perhaps, the husbands of other daughters of Lot¹. It is not uncommon for people to scoff at the thought of God's judgment—at least until our insulated and antiseptic lives are invaded by the grotesque arrival of disease, disaster and death. It would be a matter of hours before his sons-in-law would find out that this was no joke.

Rescued Again

“When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, “Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.” 16 And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city” (Genesis 19:15,16).

God’s Aggressive Mercy

Once again, Lot is rescued. While they were lingering the angels took hold of their hands and brought them outside the city, out of harms way. We are told that this is the mercy of God. The angels were not wooing Lot but rather bringing Lot, and his family, to safety. Herein lies one small, yet very significant picture of the gospel. Men are prone to linger indefinitely, but for the grace of God.

Don’t Look Back

“So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.” 18 Then Lot said to them, “Please, no, my lords! 19 “Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. 20 “See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.” 21 And he said to him, “See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will

¹ Other possibilities are: Lot's daughters might have been engaged or Lot might have lied to the crowd about the virginity of his daughters.

not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. 22 “Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there.” Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. 23 The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. 24 Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens. 25 So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. 26 But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt” (Genesis 19:17-26).

Finishing the Race

In their deliverance from judgment, Lot is told not to look back, or even stay close to Sodom. The abandonment of their former sinful dwelling had to be both geographically and in their heart. One can hardly avoid thinking of the admonition of John.

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

The recipients of the Epistle to the Hebrews were apparently under a great deal of pressure to abandon the faith². The writer of the epistle does not comfort them by appealing to their conversion. That is, he doesn't say, “Remember when you prayed the sinners prayer? You were saved then, so obviously you will always be saved, no matter what direction your future takes. I say this as one who does not believe one can fall from salvific grace³. Rather, the author challenges them to persevere. Yet he does so with a confident expectation that they will not shrink back.

“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. 36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. 37 For in just a very little while, “He who is coming will come and will not delay. 38 But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.” 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved” (Hebrews 10:35-39—NIV).

This hits the heart of a very popular, yet widely misunderstood doctrine. The modern terms are “eternal security” or “once saved always saved”, but the

² Specifically—go back to Judaism.

³ That is, I don't believe if someone is genuinely saved, that they can somehow lose their salvation.

historical and biblical terms is “the perseverance of the saints (Revelation 13:10; 14:12).” True deliverance results in perseverance. One must finish the race.

Not the Mountains!

For some reason Lot fears going to the mountains. Perhaps there were enemies on the way. He prefers a little city, Zoar, which is spared for the sake of Lot. Interestingly, we learn in verse thirty that Lot ended up leaving Zoar, because of fear and ended up in the mountains nonetheless.

Often when God delivers us out of bondage, we are not as willing as we ought to be to proceed on the path of His wisdom. Frequently men are saved, yet fail to attend church, or fail to promptly forsake sinful routines. God is patient, yet these bad decisions have their consequences.

Sodom Destroyed—Lot’s Wife

The angels could not judge Sodom until Lot was out. While the tares are being gathered, great care to protect the wheat. God is gracious and effective in His judgment to deliver righteous Lot (more on this later). But Lot’s wife has become a catch-phrase for one who is unduly obsessed with the world.

“Remember Lot’s wife. 33 “Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it” (Luke 17:32,33).

God Remembered Abraham

“And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord. 28 Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace. 29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt” (Genesis 19:27-29).

Abraham awoke to investigate how the Lord answered his prayers. Abraham, no doubt for the sake of Lot, had prayed that if there were only ten righteous people that God would spare Sodom. There were not ten righteous. If God had merely answered Abraham’s prayer, Lot would have been lost. But God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow. God’s answer went beyond Abraham’s request.

Lot's Daughters

“Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave. 31 Now the firstborn said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth. 32 “Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.” 33 So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. 34 It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, “Indeed I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.” 35 Then 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. 36 Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. 37 The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. 38 And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the people of Ammon to this day” (Genesis 19:30-38).

As one theologian stated, Lot was able to take his daughters out of Sodom, but he couldn't take Sodom out of his daughters. The Apostle Paul warns, **“Do not be deceived, bad company corrupts good morals” (1 Corinthians 15:33—NASB)**. This wicked act by Lot's daughters produced two nations who were very corrupt and enemies of God's people.

Truly, the bad decisions of a righteous man can have disastrous consequences. This is the last we hear of Lot.

II. Primary—Judgment and Deliverance

Remembering our theme verse for this series, Jesus stated, **“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39)**, how do the New Testament writers view this event? First, Jude.

“as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7).

Sodom and Gomorrah are set forth as an example of God's judgment. Peter elaborates further on what the incident at Sodom and Gomorrah teaches us.

“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; 5 and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; 6 and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; 7 and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— 9 then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,” (2 Peter 2:4-9).

God doesn't merely know how to judge, He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations. And how was Lot delivered? Look back to verses fifteen and sixteen.

“When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, “Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.” 16 And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city” (Genesis 19:15,16).

Lot's Foolishness

It seems Lot had made no good decisions. He put his family in harms way, ending up in the bosom of the Sodom. He offered his daughters to an angry mob and had to be rescued by the angels in his house. He would soon lose his wife, his daughters were morally bankrupt and he lost all the riches he had amassed while with Abraham, and after all is said in done he lingers during the impending doom of his city.

Our Merciful Deliverer

But as verse sixteen indicates, God is a merciful God. The angels took his hand and brought him to safety. As Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego stated, Our God is able to deliver us. He is our deliverer. Apart from the intercession of Abraham and the mercy of God, Lot would have been destroyed. Apart from Christ, who intercedes for us, and God the Father, who is merciful, we would have no hope of deliverance.

But for those who believe, whose eyes have been opened, whose hearts have been circumcised and have been drawn to Christ—deliverance is sure. Dear friends, but for the grace of God, we would have lingered forever. We would have died lingering and faced judgment. But God is merciful. Those, who by the grace of God, repent, and believe on His name, are assured of the deliverance of God.

Questions for Study

1. Discuss the choices made by Lot and their consequences. How can we learn from his errors (pages 2,3)?
2. Lot was accused of being judgmental. Discuss some of the false notions regarding the judgment of evil (page 4).
3. Lot is told not to look back. In what ways are we tempted to look back (page 5)?
4. Discuss proper and improper notions of eternal security (pages 5,6)?
5. Lot did not initially go where he was told when he left Sodom. Are we tempted to behave this way? How (page 7)?
6. How did God remember Abraham (page 7)?
7. How do you suppose Lot's daughters ended up in their moral condition (page 8)?
8. What are Sodom and Gomorrah an example of (page 8,9)?
9. Discuss the power of God's deliverance (page 9,10)?