

A Lot To Think About – Part 2

Genesis 19:1-38

Three strangers arrive at your doorstep. You don't know who they are. Do you:

- a) Hurry and close the drapes and run downstairs so they won't see you
- b) Turn the sprinkler on to run them off your property
- c) Answer the door with shotgun in hand and your snarling dog at your side and tell them you don't want whatever it is they're selling
- d) Invite them in for dinner
- e) Pour boiling oil on them from the upstairs bedroom window as they are about to knock

We saw last week in **chapter 18** that Abraham was approached by three strangers. They came out of nowhere and as was culturally customary he invited them to dinner. We discovered that their visit was two-fold. The first reason was to inform Abraham and Sarah that her long waiting period of having an heir was ending. Both were beyond the age of having a child but as we have been reminded time and again that nothing is too hard for God.

The second reason for their visit was to inform Abraham that the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah along with other towns in the vicinity would be laid waste because of their many grievous acts of sin. God had heard the outcry of the people and He would bring judgment on them. On behalf of his nephew, Abraham petitioned the Lord to spare the cities. Even if there were 10 righteous people in the city they would be spared. There conversation ended at that point because there weren't 10 people so God was going to mete out deserved punishment on them for their sin. The Bible says that the wages of sin is death and when a person or people group hardens their heart to the point of complete rejection, then judgment will be delivered.

We pick up from there today as we still have a Lot to think about. **Chapter 18** helps us understand why God does what He does in **chapter 19**. If we didn't have the backstory of **chapter 18**, we would

conclude that God is without mercy acting as a nihilistic and vengeful God. That is the unfortunate caricature many have of their view of God from the Old Testament. They see Him as a wrathful and egotistical God who harshly judges anyone who doesn't obey Him and fail to see that He is also loving, forgiving and merciful. They fail to understand that those characteristics are equally balanced by His justice. They fail to see that everyone has failed to measure up to His righteous standard and therefore deserve His judgment were it not for His grace through faith to save.

And that brings us to **Genesis 19**. While I want us to see a vivid picture of what happens to Sodom and Gomorrah, the greater lesson is around Lot and his poor choices, choices that could have been avoided had he been walking with the Lord as he should. The consequences of his choices not only impacted his immediate family, but also the nation of Israel for centuries afterward. I also want to consider some ways we can avoid becoming like Lot. His bad example gives us a Lot to think about. Last week we saw a two-fold visit by strangers. Let's begin in **chapter 19** with a terrible vengeance on Sodom.

I. A TERRIBLE VENGEANCE ON SODOM – vs. 1-29

If there was any ambiguity in **chapter 18** as to who these strangers were it is cleared up in **verse 1**. We learn strangers were angels.

“The two angels arrived at Sodom.”

They had accompanied the Lord to earth and were commissioned with the task of carrying out His judgment on the cities for their blatant wickedness. In **verses 1-3** we notice again hospitality extended to them. But the motive was clearly more than just for kindness. It was meant for their protection.

A. A Hospitable Act That Was Protective – vs. 1-3

Our text tells us that they arrived in the evening at the gate of the city. The meal at Uncle Abraham's had taken all afternoon. We aren't sure either the

distance from Abraham's homestead to the Sodom or even if they traveled by foot. I am of the opinion that just as they had appeared suddenly before Abraham it's also possible that they just appeared at the gate of Sodom. It's evening and Lot is seated at the gate. The gate to a city wasn't just a means of entrance into the city, it also served as the judicial and administrative center where legal matters were addressed. Issues were discussed and judged. Sitting at the gate meant that Lot wasn't only a resident of the city, he was part of the ruling counsel. He was part of the political machine that helped maintain public policy and mete out judgment when needed.

When he saw the two visitors arrive he immediately greeted them and invited them to stay at his home to which they initially declined. Our text says that Lot strongly urged them not to stay in the open square. The square was a place located in each city where public gatherings were held. Larger towns could have more than one square. But the invitation was more than just for hospitality, it was for their protection. In **verses 4-9** we read about a hostile act that was perverse.

B. A Hostile Act That Was Perverse – vs. 4-9

As Lot was rolling out the hide-a-bed cots and putting sheets on them for his guests to sleep on there was a bang on the door. It was a loud and demanding knock. We can only speculate that perhaps Lot cringed a bit inside knowing who was on the other side of the knock. We can only imagine that he strode to the door with a bit of fear and trepidation in his step. Pushing back the curtain from the window a crowd had gathered outside his home. Our text tells us that it was all the men of the city – young and old alike. There was only one thing on their mind that night. They weren't there to discuss politics or religion or sports scores. They weren't there to borrow the lawn mower or the grill for a cook-out. They weren't there to talk with Lot. What they were there for was a perverse act. We read that they wanted his two guests so that they could engage in nothing more than a homosexual gang rape of the two men, who we know to be

angels. The sadistic intent of all the men of the city was reprehensible. There weren't just a few men, homosexuality was rampant among all the men of the city. There was no physical way of escape, humanly speaking, for Lot and his guests since they surrounded the house. They were bent on one thing. It was violent in nature with evil intentions and mob rule. They would take the men by force if necessary.

Let me remind you that from **chapter 18** we read that the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were both great and grievous, and while the act of homosexuality is targeted here it is wrong to conclude that it was the only reason God judged these cities. The combination of many sins was reason for God's action. Homosexuality is no greater a sin than any other sin because all sin is egregious to God. That said it is likely that the magnitude of this sin was a primary reason for judgment since all the men, young and old alike engaged in this wicked act.

Ezekiel 16:49-50 “Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before Me...” The Hebrew word translated detestable refers to something that is morally disgusting and is the same word used in **Leviticus 18:22** that refers to homosexuality as an **'abomination.'** **Jude 7** adds that **“...Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns had given themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion.”**

When we couple this with **Romans 1:26-27** we see that it is an act of denying and disobeying God and when people continue in sin and unbelief that passage says God gives them over to even more wicked and depraved sin to show them how futile their lives are apart from God.

Lot attempted to reason with the men who could not be reasoned with. He argued from the standpoint of cultural mores that offered protection for someone shown hospitality. The men didn't care to honor the code of hospitality but instead pressed hard against

Lot to get what they wanted. If what they wanted to do to the two angels was wrong what Lot proposes is just as equally wrong, something unimaginable. “Take my two daughters instead and do with them what you want.” Kent Hughes writes that Lot placed the hospitality of the guests over the sacredness of his family. That day he abdicated the fatherly responsibility of protecting his daughters. It was his duty to protect both his guests and his daughters. **Weren’t his daughters also under the protection of his roof? Did he care more for his guests and personal reputation than he did for his daughters?** He attempted to reason with them from the standpoint of his position of authority. Whatever his motive for the exchange, his actions were wrong and without excuse.

The wicked intent of the men and Lot’s attempt to appease them with his daughters only serve to further infuriate them. They move to break down the door. It’s at that point in **vs 10-14** we see the angels demonstrate a helpful act that is preserving.

C. A Helpful Act That Is Preserving – vs. 10-14

The two angels reached out from just inside the door grabbing Lot by his tunic collar and pulled him inside. Then they struck the men with blindness so that they couldn’t find the door. Even though they were now blind they were still consumed with their lustful act. Now, one would think that being struck blind would prompt immediate fear and repentance on the part of these wicked men. It did not.

The men then asked Lot about other family in the city because the Lord had sent them to destroy it. They were to leave with haste because their wickedness had made the city ripe for judgment. **Isaiah 3:9 “The look on their faces testifies against them; they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to Them! They have brought disaster upon themselves.”**

II Peter 2:9 “...He [God] condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly.”

John Phillips rightly states that “there comes a point in the rising tide of wickedness, where God acts.” This is one of those times.

Although some have come to the conclusion about events in our recent history, we can’t know or say for sure that those events were God’s wake up call to our nation for it’s blatant and rebellious disregard to obey God’s express Word.

Some have blamed the wickedness of New Orleans for the reason hurricane Katrina decimated that city. Others have suggested that various sins like abortion was a reason God allowed 9/11.

People can make all kinds of claims that things happened because God is judging.

I knew a couple who lost their first baby who was still born and with them seated in the front on a Sunday morning the pastor said God was judging them because the father had a beard.

Who has known the mind of God for why He does or allows the things that happen? Let’s remember that when God judges it is always just and based on His righteousness. Paul answers all those who would offer their opinion on knowing the mind of God with these words in **Romans 11:33 “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His paths beyond tracing out!”**

That simply means we can’t know why God does what He does. God forgive us for being so arrogant that we should assume we know His mind on any matter especially in His acts of judgment.

The angels told Lot to get his family and hurry out of town. What is troubling to me is the end of **verse 14** where Lot attempted to get his two sons-in-law, the ones engaged to his daughters, to leave before the destruction. It says they laughed at him thinking he was joking. That tells me something about the kind of spiritual or should I say the lack of spiritual influence he had on his family particularly and the community in general. They didn’t take him seriously. The world laughed at Noah about a global flood and they laughed here.

If we came to our friends and family and urgently told them about pending destruction would they

listen to us, would they take us seriously?

From what we read in **II Peter 2:7-8** and here in **Genesis 19** there appear to be two different Lots. Peter, I believe, speaks of his position. He was righteous before God meaning that sometime in his life he had expressed faith in a coming redeemer promised back in **Genesis 3:15**, but here in **Genesis 19** we see his practice. Someone who was willing to let his daughters be abused sexually to satisfy the burning lust of wicked men and as we will see in a moment who allows himself to get drunk and commit an act of incest with his daughters.

God is going to honor Abraham's request and spare the righteous from destruction, the angels provide a helpful act that was preserving. But even their kind gesture is not without concern because we see a hesitating act that was perturbing.

D. A Hesitating Act That Was Perturbing – vs. 15-22

I am always amazed at the number of people who don't take a mandatory evacuation seriously when a hurricane is about to hit. They hunker down and hope to ride out the storm. Or when a major forest fire is consuming everything in its path as it approaches the outskirts of a community and some guy is up on his roof armed with a garden hose. I don't get it. It's like the robot on "Lost in Space" running around shouting "Danger, Will Robinson, Danger." They don't take the threat seriously.

It's dawn and the angels told Lot to get out of town or they would be consumed with the city. And Lot stood there hesitating. He wasn't sure he wanted to leave. I'd like to think that I would have enough sense to get out of Dodge fast. I hope the world doesn't have such a hold on me that I would hesitate because I'm not sure I want to give it up.

The angels had to grab their hands and pull them out of the city. As soon as they were outside the gates, they told them to run and not look back. What they said should have been a compelling reason to hurry – **"Run for your lives."**

In other words, they were to get as far away as they could and as fast as they could run because their very lives depended on it. They weren't to look back, they weren't to stop. Flee to the mountains or they would be consumed by the destruction as well. Even then Lot bargained with the angels and begged to go to a little town called Zoar not too far from Sodom. He believed that God in His mercy saved him but doubted God's ability to provide for him in the mountains. Some scholars suggest that Zoar was a smaller version of Sodom, just as wicked, but spared because Lot was there.

I had a sociology professor in college who taught that you could take a person out of the ghetto but you couldn't take the ghetto out of the person. Simply put, it's hard to change a person even if you take them from one environment and put them in another. Who knows when it began? He could have been drawn to all the city has to offer back in Ur of the Chaldeas. It was a cosmopolitan city with everything you could imagine. It may have happened as a result of their lengthy stay in Haran or when they lived in Egypt. The trappings of the city pulled him away from a love he once had for God. He had come to a point in his life where he had little moral character.

When we consider **Genesis 13** alongside **Genesis 19** we see a more complete picture of his spiritual heart condition and why he made the choices he did. **He looked east toward Sodom.** I think he already knew what awaited him there.

He longed eagerly for Sodom. He pitched his tent toward the city.

He lived embracingly in Sodom. He sat at the gate immersed in its culture.

He lingered expectantly after Sodom. He didn't want to leave even with the threat of destruction.

He lost everything because of Sodom. Everything was consumed.

His heart remained in the city as he lingered. When they finally were forced out of the city, in a last look, his wife glanced back and turned into a salt block. She lingered and looked. It was more than just a glance back, the word implies that she

lingered far back from the others outside the city because in her heart she really had refused to leave. In many respects we could say that her heart was hardened to the things of God just as those who were destroyed in the city. Consequently so was she

The heart that is not right with God lingers near the point of sin and if we don't heed the advice of Paul to flee, it will consume us.

In **verses 23-29** there is a horrific act that was punishing.

E. A Horrific Act That Was Punishing – vs. 23-29

The Lord rained down burning sulfur from heaven and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. There are some Bible scholars who explain what happened from a naturalistic viewpoint, that God used something in nature to bring the destruction. They indicate that the Jordan Valley is part of a great fault line that extends from Syria through Palestine, through the Red Sea into the Upper Nile Valley and then on down into Kenya in Eastern Africa. That's a major crack. That region has experienced extensive earthquake activity and 4,000 years ago an earthquake opened up a fissure that spewed combustible gases into the air that ignited setting the sulfur and petroleum on fire resulting in the rain of sulfur terror. God may have used a natural event but let's keep in mind what Scripture says in **verse 24 "the Lord rained down"**. However it happened it was God's doing. It's how God judged them. It reminds me of what Peter says that the earth will be destroyed by a fervent heat. Maybe it's global warming, maybe it's a nuclear holocaust or maybe it's just God saying "enough, burn up." However it happened in our text it was God's doing.

But then we read that God had remembered Abraham and spared Lot. The cities and plains were destroyed and today it remains a wasteland. Archeologists have identified the southern part of the salt sea as the location of these cities. It was a terrible vengeance on Sodom and shows us God's view about sin. In the remainder of the passage we find a troublesome venture by sisters.

II. A TROUBLESOME VENTURE BY SISTERS – vs. 30-38

In **verses 20-32** we see a detestable plan

In **verses 33-35** we see a depraved performance

In **verses 36-38** we see a destructive problem

They initially headed for the city but found themselves in the mountains as the angels had first directed. From their limited perspective they assumed there was no one for them to marry. If that was the case how would they perpetuate the human race? There was no other man around except for their father. They hatched a plan that was just as immoral as what Lot had planned for them back in Sodom. They got him drunk after which he lost all control and willingly gave in to their incestuous plan. His lack of self-control and willing participation in this detestable scheme led to a depraved performance and resulted in a destructive problem. They both got pregnant from which came the Moabite and Ammonite people. Both people groups would become bitter enemies of Israel.

Let me conclude this passage with the words of one author who suggests that **"Lot did the things he did because he chose to live in his old sin nature and do what was easy, and he made choices to flirt with evil instead of living to honor God. As a result, there was suffering for Lot, his wife and daughters, and, by association, the nation of Israel for years to come. The lesson for us is that we need to make choices that do not conform to the world and to submit to the Word of God, which will guide us into living lives that are pleasing to God."**

This is a very sobering chapter, not in just what we read about Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. It's sobering because everyone of us has the capacity to be just like Lot, to allow sin into our lives that can draw us away from God and toward greater and greater compromise so that in the end we are indistinguishable from the world, where we have lost the respect of and influence on those around us. Our heart begins to cool for God when we look at, long for, live in and linger after whatever it is that might be our Sodom. Jesus calls it forsaking our first love (**Revelation 2:4**).

**So how do we avoid the pitfalls that ensnared Lot?
How do we keep from getting lured by our Sodom?**
Sodom can be anything that cools our love for God.
Let's close with a three-fold virtue for saints.

III.A THREE-FOLD VIRTUE FOR SAINTS

We're all sinners saved by grace, but in God's eyes we are saints, righteous, made whole, yet in the old nature we can still be pulled away from loving God as we should. You have maybe heard it said that our aim in this life should be to become in practice what we are in position. God sees us as holy yet we all fall short of that and so the injunction by Peter is to be holy just as God is holy or as John would write we are to be pure just as God is pure (**I Peter 1:15-16; I John 3:2-3**).

If that is our aim the first virtue I would suggest is to have a repulsion for sin.

A. A REPULSION FOR SIN

Proverbs 8:13 "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil."

Proverbs 6:16 "These six things do I hate, yea seven are an abomination to Me."

Amos 5:15 "Hate the evil..."

I John 2:15-17

Romans 12:9 "Abhor (hate) what is evil, cling to what is good."

The word abhor is a strong word and means to shrink away from in disgust or to loathe, to have an intense hatred for something.

How much do we hate sin and I'm not talking about just or only hating the sin we see in others, but how much do we hate it in our own lives?

In his song about the prodigal son, the late Keith Green describes him meeting a traveling companion who told the prodigal all about what was in the city and all the women he'd had. The prodigal son then asked his new friend if that wasn't sinful to which the new companion said no, it's not that bad. That's what the world and the devil would want you to believe. A little compromise is harmless.

When we compromise our view of what we think is

sin compared to what God thinks of it we are well on our way to becoming a Lot and that gives us a Lot to think about. We are to hate sin so much that we take the angel's advice and run from it as fast as we can so that we aren't consumed by it.

The psalmist gives us some sound advice.

Psalm 139:23-24

If I search my heart, I'm prone not to come up with the same list God will about what is sin, so if we are serious about sin we will let Him do the assessment of our heart since He is both the measure and means of holiness. We must be repulsed by sin. Next, there must be a repentance from sin.

B. A REPENTANCE FROM SIN

We all know **I John 1:9** by heart. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Psalm 51:1-4, 9

Romans 6:1-2

If we are going to hate sin, then we must confess it and turn from and not live in it any longer. We can't have a halfhearted attitude about sin and say that "oh, well it's just my nature" or "it's just a little thing" or "It doesn't really matter because God will forgive me anyway." We're not perfect but, if we hate sin, we'll confess it and repent of it.

C. A RESISTANCE TO SIN

Romans 12:1-2

Galatians 5:16

II Timothy 2:22

Ephesians 6:10-11, 18

Psalm 119:9-11

Resisting sin can only be done when we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us as we learn to hate sin, to run from it, pursuing righteousness instead, and combat it by hiding it in our heart.

We have been given a Lot to think about. He shows us what can happen when let sin linger. Left unattended it can result in losing our love for God.

How close are you to looking and living like Lot?