

(Genesis) Genesis 18-19

by Joe Focht

The Lord appears to Abram and promises him that Sarah will have a son, and Abram questions God's justice and mercy in the face of the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Duration: 1:01:53

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 20:7, Matthew 6:33, Luke 17:32, James 2:23

Topics: "Divine Encounter", "Hospitality Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Abraham and his encounter with the Lord in the plains of Mamre. The preacher highlights the significance of Abraham's communion with God, emphasizing that God saw it as a conversation with a friend rather than a negotiation. The preacher also mentions that Abraham, despite his old age, showed great hospitality to the three strangers who appeared before him, offering them food and drink. The sermon concludes with a prayer, urging the listeners to seek God and reminding them of His faithfulness and grace.

Transcript

Genesis chapter 18, Abram is sitting in his tent door, 99 years old, after the Lord has come to him again. Remember back in chapter 17, verse 1, that Jehovah, the Lord God Almighty, it says, appeared to Abraham. What an incredible experience.

And here he is now, Abram, sitting in the door of his tent. He's been in the promised land for 24 years now. And he's no longer a city slicker.

He has learned how to live in tents. He's learned to be a Bedouin, as it were. He's learned the ropes.

And here is Abram sitting in his tent, in the door of his tent. And verse 1 tells us that the Lord, Yahweh, appears to him. Then it will go on to say, three strangers came.

So it's making it clear right off the bat that one of them is the Lord. And it says, the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre. And he, Abram, sat in the tent door in the heat of the day, probably sitting there thinking, this is the year the Lord promised that this program would finally get on the road with Sarah and I, this promised son that we've been hearing of for so long.

And as he sat there, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and lo, or consider, three men stood by him. When he saw them, he ran. So he's pretty spry for 99.

He ran to meet them from the tent door and bowed himself to the ground and said, my Lord. Now, this is a term of respect. Bible scholars are not sure at this particular point if he realizes who exactly it is.

I personally get the sense that he does, but he certainly will as the chapter goes on. My Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched.

Wash your feet. Rest yourselves under the tree. And I will fetch a morsel of bread and comfort you, your hearts.

After that, you shall pass on. For therefore are you come to your servant. He senses there's a purpose.

They've come. He's going to extend that hospitality to them. And they said, so do as thou hast said.

Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah and said, make ready quickly three measures of fine meal. Knead it and make cakes upon the hearth. Now, she's 89 years old, so she's got to jump to it here too.

And grind the grain. They didn't buy it in the store then. And Abraham, now he's still running.

This is pretty remarkable. Abraham ran unto the herd and fetched a calf, tender and good, and gave it unto a young man, one of his servants, and he hasted to dress it, to slaughter the animal, to trim it, to cook it. And he took butter and milk and the calf, which he had dressed, and set it before them.

Now notice, this is not kosher. He's putting the milk and the animal and the butter before them. This is pre-law.

Set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree and they did eat. Now, it's interesting because two of them are angels, and they're eating.

Not that they have to. The Lord here eating. Hebrews chapter 13 verse 2 tells us that we should take heed to entertain strangers because some have entertained angels unaware.

Wouldn't it be interesting when we get to heaven to find out if any of the folks we pulled over helped change their tire on the side of the road or somebody that looked down and out that you may have given five or ten or twenty bucks to or somebody that you helped out or somebody that you showed hospitality to. Wouldn't it be fun to get there and see them stand there with wings and, hey, remember me? I'm just kidding. I don't think angels have wings.

But the idea is it would be interesting to get there and see if we've entertained any of God's angels. These actually sit down and eat there. Now Jesus, you remember, after his resurrection, he was passing evidently through the locked doors.

He was appearing and disappearing. And finally he would say to the disciples, do you have anything to eat? And they said, yes, we have some fish and a honeycomb. And he did eat with his resurrected body, with the spirit drive.

So, and I imagine in heaven the food is no cow, by the way. You can help yourselves without worrying about any of the things we worry about here. But these angels sit down to eat.

Now it tells us that Abraham stood by and watched. Now that is the culture over there. Today even in Israel, if you are involved with any of the Bedouins and you come into their tent, their hospitality is extended to you and you are safe as long as you are there.

When you first enter their tent, and there's a whole unspoken language that will take place, they will make an extremely bitter cup of tea and give that to you first. And as you drink that tea, you are remembering all of your bitter memories. They want that all out of the way so they can open fellowship with you.

And as you drink the bitter tea, all of the bitter things of your past are supposed to roll them through your mind and settle them once and all so they don't have to be the center part of your fellowship with them as you're there in their tent. After you've done that bitter tea, then they give you a small, extremely sweet and powerful cup of coffee, which will help you have conversation. And that is the extension then of hospitality.

Then they will set the meal before you and they won't eat. They will stand by and watch you pig out. And that is... Spin with a Bedouin.

That is their pleasure. In that particular culture, they will watch you eat until you can't eat anymore. When you go, oh, and they see you loosening your belt and you can't fit anymore in, then they'll eat what's left.

But they will stand by and watch you eat as much as you can. After the dinner, the Bedouin then will extend to you again a small cup of coffee. If he gives it to you with his right hand, that means he's been pleased with your company and you are free to stay.

If he gives it to you with your left hand, it means it was nice, but you can go now. If after he gives you this cup of coffee with his right hand and you drink that, he extends a second cup of coffee, you then can stay as long as you want, a year, two years, you are welcome to be a partaker of his hospitality. So it is something that is still in the culture today.

Abraham prepared the meal and as he did, he stood by and he watched them dine and eat until they were full. He stood by. It's exactly the way the culture is today amongst the Bedouins.

Of course, today when you go to Israel, you'll see some of the black Bedouin tents with a TV antenna sticking out of the top. They have a Honda generator and they like to watch whatever they watch. I'm not sure.

And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? Now, Abraham says, Behold, she's in the tent. Now, the culture was she would be in another part of the tent. It wasn't the proper thing for her to sit with the men as they talked about important things.

She would be in another part of the tent. And no doubt they're talking loud enough for Sarah to hear. Where is thy wife? Abraham says, Behold, in the tent.

And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door. No doubt she's eavesdropping.

She's got a glass with her that's against the tent. Sarah heard it in the tent door which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, and I like this, well stricken in age.

When the Bible says that, you know, well stricken. That's what they were. And it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

She is through menopause. Those years are gone. Therefore, because of her age, because she was well stricken, because the manner of women has ceased with her, when she hears this, therefore Sarah laughed within herself saying, After I am waxed old, shall I have pleasure? And she didn't just laugh at herself.

And my Lord being old also, it was as much a joke to think about Abraham as it was of her evidently. Now, God has been waiting. And it says that, look down in verse 14, Is anything too hard for the Lord at the appointed time? And there's an appointed time for everything that goes on in our lives.

I think sometimes we are discouraged waiting for God. He is not doing things the way we think He should do them. Then too often we will jump in like Abraham and Sarah did to try to help God.

We will lend ourselves to the program with our haggars with whatever, and we produce a problem. And yet in God's timetable, there is an appointed time. And God will do things in such a way that when they finally roll out, we will know in our hearts that we have nothing to contribute to that which God is about to do.

Because sometimes in a very specific way, God wants us to understand that it is all Him, and it has nothing to do with us. So now He has waited until they are beyond their own abilities. They're no longer, Abraham's no longer a veril.

She's no longer able to bear children. Their is impossible for them at this time to have children. That is what God wanted to happen.

Because this is the son of promise. This will be a miraculous birth that will be representative of another miraculous birth that will come, another son of promise, the Messiah. It is a resurrection as it were from dead bodies that life would come.

And there will be remarkable things that happen in the life of this son, Isaac. So God now has waited until it is impossible. Now, believe me, she has this son, a year later.

She lives 27 more years. Abraham lives 75 more years. That's what I say.

He remarries when he's over 160, and has six more children. Six more sons. So when God fixes things, God fixes things.

And evidently at 160, Abraham realizes it's better to marry than to burn, and he takes a second wife. We'll come there. Keturah.

And as we come in the chapters, those sons and their lineages are listed. It's remarkable. So at this point, it is impossible.

God rejuvenates them and blesses them, and it's remarkable to see the process. So Sarah laughs. Now the important phrase in verse 12 is within herself.

She didn't laugh out loud. She laughs to herself. And the Lord said unto Abraham, now why did your wife laugh? Now that upset Sarah a little bit, because how did the guy on the other side of the tent flap know that she laughed? You see, she laughed to herself.

Very important. Within herself. It wasn't out loud.

And she's hearing, you know, Abraham's been telling her these stories for years. Oh, these, you know, the Lord comes to me, appears to me, talks to me. Our seed's going to be like the sand of the seashore, like the stars of heaven.

And she's going, no, you know, come on, Abraham, with this story, you know. And now she hears this voice again. You're going to, you know, you're going to, next year, you're coming to, I'm going to, I'm going to bless, and a child's going to be born.

And she's going, pfft. But in, quietly in her heart, now she hears the voice on the other side of the tent flap say, why did your wife laugh? Saying, shall I? Now, he even says what she said in her heart, see? Shall I of a surety bear a child which am old? And Sarah's thinking, how'd he know that? She's still listening. Who is this guy? And she hears, is anything too hard for the Lord? Now, King James is too hard.

The Hebrew is, is anything too marvelous or is anything too wonderful? Or is anything too wondrous for God? Is there anything that is too spectacular for God to do? At the appointed time, and there is for all of us, God's appointments, I will return unto thee according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. Then Sarah denied, saying, I didn't laugh. Now, I don't know if she says this out loud, or, you know, she forgets that she's eavesdropping and not supposed to be listening.

From the other side of the tent flap, you hear, uh-uh, not me, I didn't laugh. Sarah denied, saying, I laugh not, for she was afraid. She's getting the picture now.

And he, the Lord, said, no, you did laugh. In fact, this son will be named Laughter, and that will be a reminder for the rest of her life that she didn't laugh. And Abram laughed in a different way when he heard, so Itzhak means laughter.

And the men rose up from there, and they looked toward Sodom. And Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and powerful man? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him.

Now, very interesting, the Lord says, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I am about to do? I'm going to read a few verses. You don't have to follow. 2 Chronicles, chapter 20, just so it will be on the tape.

Verse 7 says, Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend forever? Again, in Isaiah 41, it says this, But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. And again, in James, and I won't turn there, in chapter 2, verse 23, it speaks of Abraham as the friend of God. So this is the handle that this man is handed by the Holy Spirit, as the scripture is written, that Abraham was the friend of God.

That's an incredible thing. Imagine that being put upon you, the friend of God. And you know, the amazing thing is, it's the Holy Spirit that inspired that.

Isn't it amazing for God to write that about a human being? You know, for a human being just to say, God's my friend, kind of my buddy, kind of thing, is almost blasphemous. It's almost, you would never think to do that. You'd be afraid of being struck by lightning.

But God has the right to look at any one of us and say, that's my friend. It's pretty remarkable. Now, Jesus in John 15, 15 says, I no longer call you my servants, but my friends.

Because a servant doesn't know what his master is doing, but Jesus says, I'm going to make all things known to you. Isn't it remarkable that Jesus tells us that through him, through the atonement, through the death and resurrection of Christ, we have the same relationship with God Almighty that Abraham did. That God is not ashamed to be called our God because we seek a better place, the place he's promised us.

And that he also sees us as his friends. Now, lots of times we don't see ourselves as the friend of God, no doubt. But there is a remarkable familiarity in the Bible that God in his sovereignty reveals the right to show us.

It is wrong for us to be so familiar with God that there is a disrespect of his majesty and of his power and of his kingship. But there is the prerogative, because he is sovereign, he is the king, for God to let us know that it is his spirit in our hearts crying Abba, Daddy. That we now also are friends of God.

He is the one who is allowed to tell us that we can actually wound his heart or put his heart in turmoil. There's a number of places in the Old Testament, in Hosea and Ezekiel. And that we can grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

That God has chosen, again in some remarkable way, to make himself that vulnerable to us. Because that is the cost of love. Vulnerability.

And to the degree that you love someone is to the same degree they can hurt you. If you haven't noticed yet, you will. And here, shall I hide from Abraham? There's a wonderful familiarity.

I'm able to entrust my heart, my purposes to Abraham. Shall I hide from him this thing I'm going to do? And he says, because Abraham, he's going to become a great nation. And I know that he's going to instruct his children.

He's going to instruct his lineage about who I am and the way that I work. And you see, Abraham will raise a question. Shall not the God of all the earth do what is right? The judge of all the earth? Are you going to judge the wicked along with the righteous? This is the very point that God is pushing towards.

Because this question has to be answered. If God would have just walked away from Abraham and rained down fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham forever would have been left wondering, why did he do that? What is going on? But God now begins to share his art with Abraham. Because he says, Abraham will be, of all the men on the face of the earth right now, the earth covered with idolaters, this is the man that the promises have been made to.

The promised seed will come through his loins and he will pass from generation to generation the truth amongst men in regards to who I am and that will then be entrusted to a nation and that will ultimately be revealed through the incarnation Christ and given to us. So God says, I'm not going to do this thing without letting Abraham see perfectly clear how I am and who I am and my heart and my mercy and my justice and how all of this measures out. Now it tells us that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was very grievous.

Look at verse 20. The Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, because their sin is very grievous. Now what makes it more grievous is their sinning against light.

Remember that Abraham with 318 armed servants in a miraculous battle, much like Gideon with only 300 against the Midianites, had overturned the armies of these four kings from Persia, from Elam, and Shadr-le-Amor at the head and they had defeated the five kings of the plain. Here goes Abraham with just 318 armed servants and puts them to flight. God, no doubt, as the Old Testament says, disconfited them, put fear in them, they headed for the hills.

But Abraham had returned the men and the women of Sodom with the goods and the riches and so forth. And the king of Sodom had come, his name was Beer, and said to Abraham, Abraham, you know, give me the souls, give me the men and women back. You take the goods, you take the spoils.

And Abraham had said, no, there isn't anything you have that I want attached to me. There is no thing of your wealth that I would touch to give anybody any sense that I approve of who you are. You already have my nephew locked in your clutches.

There is no thing, because of the God I worship is the God who is the possessor of heaven and earth, there is no thing that you can add to me. But the one thing that Sodom and Gomorrah had from Abraham was a clear testimony of the living God, the possessor of heaven and earth, who in his grace, though they were sinful, had delivered them. Years now have gone on and the perversion of Sodom and Gomorrah just grew worse and worse and worse.

And the fact that they were singing against great light and a great testimony and a great deliverance where all five cities of the plain had been delivered makes their sin even more grievous. I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it which has come up unto me. If not, I will know.

And the men turned their faces from there and went towards Sodom, the two angels. But Abraham stood yet by the Lord. And look, isn't this beautiful? Abraham drew near and said, wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? So the picture is this.

God doesn't come down because he needs information. He knows everything. He comes down and says to Abraham, I am not one who judges by the seeing of the eye or the hearing of the ear, as Isaiah says.

I judge righteous judgment. I judge inequity and injustice. And he says, Abraham, I'm the one who sees this thing and knows whether it's right or wrong.

And for Abraham's sake, he says, we know we're going to measure all this out. Not for his own. He already knows.

And the two angels head towards Sodom. And just imagine, the Lord there in human form stays there and stands there. And Abraham somehow watches these two angels walk off into the distance, down into the valley towards Sodom.

And then Abraham comes up alongside of the Lord and says he drew near. And what a wonderful experience to how Yahweh God stand there and to draw near and to talk in a soft voice, to look into his face and say, certainly you won't judge the righteous along with the wicked. And he will not.

2 Peter chapter 2 beginning of verse 7 tells us that, that God knows how to judge the wicked and to spare the righteous. And that is in context of Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot. By the way, that's very relative to us, isn't it? He's going to say, Lord, if there's 50 righteous people in Sodom, won't you spare it for the 50

that are righteous? And God says, I will.

That's a great consolation because I know, again, that there's at least 50 righteous in Philly because there's 6,000 of you guys here on Sundays. Look over in verse 22, chapter 9, the angels finally say to Lot, escape from here. I cannot do anything till you come out.

I like that. I like that. Because God won't judge the righteous with the wicked.

He abhors unjust scales and unjust balances. We'll find out all through the law. Verse 24 says, peradventure, there's 50 righteous within the city.

Abraham talking to God. Wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the 50 righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this matter, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee, shall not the judge of all the earth do what is right? And of course, he will. But this is the very point that he wanted to bring Abraham to, recorded for us.

And the Lord said, if I find in Sodom 50 righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. That's why it tells us that we are the salt of the earth, the church. In fact, Jesus says it, it's emphatic in the Greek, you alone are the salt of the earth.

Mormons are not the salt of the earth. I have nothing against Mormons. Muslims are not the salt of the earth.

I have nothing against Muslims. Buddhists are not the salt of the earth. I have nothing against Buddhists.

Jesus, talking to those who believe in him, emphatically says, you alone are the salt of the earth. It is because of our presence that judgment has not fallen on this world. If we were not here, all that would remain would be a Christ-rejecting throng, and God would rain his fire down immediately.

But because we are here, and because we are sown as seed amongst a lost generation, God is enduring, and God is merciful, and God is allowing us to be the vehicle whereby a generation will hear of his love and of his goodness before judgment comes. So God says in Sodom, hey, if there's 50 there, I'll spare. Abram answered and said, behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.

Perhaps there shall lack five of the 50. What if you get there and find out there's only 45, and we bargained, bargained over 50, he says. Wilt thou destroy all the city for the lack of five? And he said, if I find there 40 and five, I will not destroy it.

Now, I don't know if Abram's getting closer and closer as this conversation is going on. And he spake to him yet again and said, well, perhaps there shall be only 40 there. The Lord doesn't wait for him to finish this time.

He says, I will not destroy for the 40's sake. And he said unto him, oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Perhaps there shall be 30 that are found there.

And he said, I will not do it if I find 30 there. He said, behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord. Perhaps there shall be 20 found there.

Do I hear 10? You know, this is an amazing conversation. He said, I will not destroy it for the 20's sake. And he said, oh, let not, don't let the Lord be angry.

I'm going to speak just one more time. Perhaps 10 shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for the 10's sake.

Or, by the way, for the 40's sake. There are four that he finds and leads out. Abram had enough faith to go down to 10.

God delivered four. And the Lord went his way as soon as he had left off from communing. Isn't it interesting God's perspective of this conversation was not Abraham trying to beat the price down.

God's perspective was communing because he met a friend, a like-hearted soul who was concerned about the life of the righteous. And as God records that conversation, he calls it communing. When he had left off communing with Abraham, Abraham returned to his place.

You know, those of you who have been on the trip with us to Israel, it's part of the culture there. When you go into a shop to buy something, there is an unspoken code where, I remember the last \$60 shirt I bought, I bought for \$15. Because you go in and the shop owner understands, you're going to see something you like and say, how much is that shirt? He's going to say to you, that shirt is \$60.

Now, he expects you to say, that is ridiculous. And then you're supposed, he just gave you a ridiculously high price, then you're supposed to give him a ridiculously low price. I'll give you \$2 for it.

\$2? And he's supposed to scream, you must be crazy. I'll sell it to you for \$40. I can't pay \$40.

I'll give you \$5. \$5? You must be crazy. I can sell it for \$35.

I'm not buying it for \$35. I'll give you \$10. Now, if you leave before you have this argument, they're offended.

Because this is the way it's supposed to be. Don McClure told me that he, in one of the streets in the old city in Jerusalem, figured, you know, I'm going to go in and I'm going to argue with two or three of these guys and see how well. And he said, after the third argument, he said he would talk with one and he got them down to \$21.

It was a rock. They started out around \$100. And he said, I went to the next place and he said, when I left, this guy was yelling at me and screaming.

I went to the next place, got them down to \$21. And he said, I got the next guy down to \$22. So he said, I realized, didn't you know, this area here of \$21, \$22, they're all coming at the same price, is about as low as they can go and still make something on it.

So he figured, I'd give it one more shot. And he said, he said, as I walked out and started walking down, he said, the shop owner ran out behind me to the top of his lung scream, look out, there's a Scotsman. That's pretty commendable for a Scotsman to freak out the shop owners in the old city.

Chapter 19, verse one says, there came the two angels to Sodom at evening, and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom. Now, it contrasts interestingly with 18.1, where God comes and Abram is sitting in the tent, in the tent door, in the door of his tent. He comes here and Lot is sitting in the gate of Sodom.

The gate of the city was the place where strangers, where news was spread. It was the place where decisions were made. It was where the elders of the city would sit when you go to Israel.

And one of the things we get to see is an ancient gate, and it's shady all day, it's stone, it's cool there. And though it may be in the heat of the day, you can sit in the gate is a cool place. And you can sit there.

And that is where the decisions were made about the city. That is where their strategies were made about government. And that is why Jesus said, the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.

What he's talking about is the strategies, the decisions that are made, you know, the stratagems of darkness will not prevail against the church. It isn't a matter of a gate chasing us down the street. That's not what it's talking about.

Now, Lot is sitting in the gate. No doubt when the king of Sodom had received this deliverance from Abram, that Bera, the king of Sodom, had been honored Lot because Lot was Abraham's kin. And Abraham probably said one of the reasons I was my nephew was taken away.

This is a blood relative. So now Lot is sitting in the gate of Sodom. No doubt he is honored to a degree until he begins to cross them.

But at some point, at least he's given favor. He's sitting there in the gate of Sodom and Lot seeing them, these two angels rose up to meet them. He bowed himself with his face towards the ground.

And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, unto your servant's house and tarry all night. Wash your feet. You shall rise up early and go on your ways.

And they said, No, we will abide in the street all night. Now they're testing him. You know, Lot is going to say in his heart, You can't stay in the street.

The men of the city are wicked. They're going to destroy you. They're putting him in the place where he is having to wrestle with that because he had compromised his life.

He had been part of one of the highest callings of all humankind. When Abram was called out of Ur of the Chaldees, he was part of that. And Abram would be set aside from all other human beings to bring the promised seed into the world and begin this lineage.

He had been part of that. He had compromised it. He had turned away from it.

He's sitting in the gate of Sodom now, finding out that he has no power at all. He says, Turn in. They say, No, we're going to stay in the street tonight.

And he pressed them. He argued with them greatly. And they finally turned in unto him and entered into his house.

And he made them a feast. We don't hear anything about Mrs. Lot cooking here. Evidently, again, what she liked to make was reservations.

Notice Sarah was cooking the bread before. He makes a feast and he baked unleavened bread and they did eat. And before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, come past or surrounded the house roundabout.

Notice, both old and young, all the people from every quarter. Now, this is remarkable. All of the men of Sodom, old and young, come to the door of Lot's house.

Two new men are in town and the entire city knows about it. Incredible corruption. They called unto Lot and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? The angels having human form, they were perceived as men, visitors.

Bring them out to us that we may know them. The Hebrew is that we may have relations with them. They were desiring to sodomize, to have homosexual relationships, to abuse these two men.

That is why homosexuality is synonymous with sodoming and sodomites and Sodom. The name of that sin then becomes synonymous with the place. The entire town, the old men and the young men from every quarter noticed that two new young men came into town and they surrounded Lot's house and they said we want you to bring these two men out to us.

Now, before we finish next week, maybe we'll take a quick journey through scripture and see God's perspective of this problem. Lot went out at the door unto them and shut the door behind him and said, I pray you, and isn't this sad, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now I have two daughters which have not known a man.

They're virgins. Let me, I pray you, bring them out to you and do you to them whatever you want. You can hear the girls going, way to go, dad, we appreciate this.

Good thing these guys don't like girls. Do unto them whichever good in your eyes, only unto these men do nothing. For therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.

There's that culture, the sense of I've given them hospitality, I want you to honor that. Now, we're going to see the anger. This is militant homosexuality.

As soon as they hear the word do not so wickedly, as soon as they hear their lifestyle being judged in this scene, there is anger. They said stand back. They said again, this fellow, speaking of Lot, came into sojourn, he's traveling through, and he will needs be a judge.

Don't you judge us, don't you call our lifestyle wicked. Now will we deal worse with you than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, upon Lot, even Lot, and they came near to break down the door.

But the men, the angels, put forth their hand and pulled Lot into the house to them and shut the door. And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness. Now, 2nd Kings 6.18 is the only other time we find this word.

The idea is, it's some kind of a confusion. It doesn't seem to be a black blindness. But they're smitten with blindness in the sense that they lose their senses.

They forget what they're doing. They can't, it seems they can't see in some sense. We're not sure if they're all smitten with the idea of black blindness.

We're not sure. But they were smitten with blindness, both small, notice, and great, so that they wearied themselves to find the door. Now this is remarkable to me.

You know, these guys still stay at it. There's a miraculous judgment that comes upon them, a blindness, and instead of them all stopping and saying, wait a minute guys, maybe we made the wrong decision here, maybe we could think this over. In their blindness, they continue to weary themselves to find the door.

That is staggering to me. And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides son-in-law? Now evidently the two daughters that we're going to read about are engaged because we're just told they were virgins, and we'll see that they deal treacherously with their father to continue their family line later. So though it says they're married, it seems they were in the period of espousal.

He says, Do you have any here besides your son-in-law? Notice, thy sons, now did Lot have sons that we don't know of, and thy daughters, doesn't even mention his wife, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place. Now isn't this a shame? There had been a point not long before this where it says there arose a contention between the herdmen of Lot and between the herdmen of Abraham, because they were so great in number, and the flocks were so great, they couldn't co-exist in an open land together. And Abraham said, You divide yourself from me, pick whatever part of the land you want, and Lot divided himself.

Now here we are a number of years later, all that Lot has is his wife, his two daughters, we don't know anything about sons. Son-in-laws think that he's mocking when they hear of the judgment of God, and we hear nothing about his servants. We hear nothing about his herdmen.

Are they all lost? Are they all absorbed into Sodom and Gomorrah? What a great tragedy, and what a great tragedy. Any here besides these few? For we will destroy this place because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out and spoke unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city.

But he seemed as one that mocked unto his son-in-laws. What an anemic witness he had been. It's interesting because 2 Peter tells us in chapter 2 that Lot's righteous soul was vexed from day to day when he saw the wicked behavior of the people that lived there, and it calls him that just man and that righteous soul.

It doesn't say Lot wasn't a believer, and again, I think, you know, the thing is saved man wasted life. You know, Alan Redpath, who had spoken in a number of the Calvary chapels before he died, told Don McClure, he said, he said, I remember as a young man listening to a preacher in England, and in his sermon he said, saved man wasted life. And he said, that rattled over and over again in my mind.

Everywhere I went, that's all I could hear. He said, when I was on the train, and the wheels of the train were going clackety clackety clackety clack, he said, all I could hear was saved man wasted life. He said, the train tracks were saying it to me.

He said, I heard the pigeons outside saying, saved man wasted life. He said, I heard the thunder saying, saved man wasted life. And he said, it was through that that I turned my life to Jesus Christ wholeheartedly and decided to live for him, and I'm thankful that Alan Redpath did, because he's enriched many of us through his writings and his commitment to Christ.

But that was Lot. Saved man wasted life. No influence on the men of Sodom, no influence on his own wife, no influence on his daughters.

He chose the best and ends up living in a cave, drunk. Saved man wasted life. Abraham chooses to remain in a tent and has everything.

He has perspective. He knows what's coming on Sodom. Lot is in Sodom, has no clue.

And people think the way you get a bead on your generation is to mingle with them, dress like them, listen to their music, become part of them. No way. The way to understand any generation is to be completely separated unto God, because it is in his presence that we gain perspective on the world that we live in and the generation that we live in the midst of.

It is from his word and from his spirit. It has nothing to do with living in Sodom. Abraham was living in the mountains in a tent and he knew what was about to happen in Sodom.

Lot was in the midst of Sodom and had no idea of what was about to happen. He seems as one that is mocking to his son-in-laws. And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife and thy two daughters, which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

Verse 16, And while he lingered, the men laid hold on his hand, upon the hand of his wife, upon the hand of his two daughters. Notice this note, the Lord being merciful to him. And they brought him forth and set him out of the city.

I don't know about you guys, but if angels came to my house, if they struck everybody in the town blind, they said to me, Tomorrow judgment is going to fall on the city. They would not have to wake me up the next morning and tell me to pack. I'd be ready to go.

I'd have the car gassed up, I would be ready. And now it says, Lot is lingering. And they finally have to take him by the hand and drag him out of the city.

So evidently one angel has his wife's hand and his hand, and the other angel has the hands of his two daughters, and the angels actually have to drag them out of the city. No doubt the men of Sodom are still, you know, groping around. It's an incredible scene to me.

It says, The Lord being merciful, he sure didn't deserve it. Not that any of us do. And it came to pass when they had brought them forth abroad, he said, Escape for thy life.

And that is what God valued in this. Look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

And Lot says unto them, O not so, my lord. Behold now, thy servant, I have found grace in your sight, and you have magnified your mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life. I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil thing take me and I die.

You know, this angel's got to be going, Ay vey, you know what I mean? What are you talking about? We came here, we're saving you and your wife and your daughters. You won't pack, you won't leave, we have to drag you out of the city. After all this, we tell you to go to the mountains.

Now you're telling me I'm too old to go to the mountains. Something bad might happen to me. If you stay here, buddy, something bad is going to happen.

I mean, it is remarkable for me to look at this. Obviously, I do not understand everything that's going on here. Why didn't he go to Abraham? He knew where his tent was in Mamre.

Why didn't he go there? Pride? I don't know. Behold now, this city that's near to flee unto, it is a little one, like that matters to angels. Let me escape there.

Is it not a little one? My soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow the city for the which thou hast spoken, but hurry up and get out of here. That's what verse 22 says in Hebrew.

For I cannot do anything, here's the beautiful word, until thou become hither. Therefore the name of the city is Zoar, which means little. And the sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

Day had broken, it was daylight. Then the Lord reigned upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire, notice, from the Lord, here's the origin, out of heaven. Now, it's the first time you have the word fire used in the Bible, some of you who like to take note of those kinds of things.

And he overthrew the cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and notice, and that which grew upon the ground, even the foliage. Now, it's very interesting to take note, of course, the Dead Sea, and particularly the southern end is where most scholars feel the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were. They have discovered a temple in the southern part of the area, and the huge steps there are worn down from literally thousands and thousands and thousands of people entering this idolatrous temple.

It was well attended. They have unearthed tombs in the southern part of the Dead Sea on the side of Jordan, and most scholars estimate that there were over a million people by the tombs they've uncovered living in the plain at that time. Now, whatever happened there was so momentous that it cracked the earth a fifth of the earth's circumference.

The Jordan Valley Rift going from Damascus all the way down into the Nile to North Africa is one-fifth of its way around the circumference of the earth. The Dead Sea in the northern, 40 miles long, 10 miles wide, northern end is 1,400 foot deep in places. The southern end, most of it 10 to 20, sometimes 3 foot deep.

But it is filled with potash and with salt and with asphalt. Josephus calls it the Asphalt Sea. It is filled with all of the things that would remain after a tremendous firestorm.

And no doubt the slime pits that were there, the bitumen, the asphalt, the high deposits of asphalt and oil, but it tells us in Jude 7 that it was eternal fire that fell from God out of heaven, no doubt that fire then igniting, as it came down with the force it came down with, all of those oil deposits and so forth. The tremendous, tremendous cataclysm. The New Testament word that Peter uses is catastrophe.

It's the same word that's used of Jesus overturning the tables of the money changers. So a tremendous upheaval as this takes place. And yet remarkably, Zoar is spared.

If Lot had not been there, that city also would have been gone. Certainly a remarkable, remarkable sequence here. The Dead Sea is the lowest place on the face of the earth.

Where Abram was in the area of Hebron is 26-2800 feet above sea level. We're down at 1200 feet below sea level here. So what a view it was as Abraham would arise in the morning and see the smoke coming up out of the valley as the smoke of a great furnace, it says.

His wife, verse 26, looked back, notice, from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. Now, we looked at this this morning. His wife, the idea is continually looked back as she lagged behind him, from behind him.

It wasn't as though the angel said two things, don't look back and don't tarry behind. She did both. It wasn't a thing like Medusa in mythology where you look at this woman with snakes for hair and as soon as you look at her, you turn to stone.

That's not the impression we get here. Lot's wife lingered further and further back, further behind him, and was longing for Sodom and fell under the judgment that came upon that place. Now, very interesting, Dr. Paul Bromley, before he died, who was a historic archaeologist and an anthropologist, said with professors he had worked with, I believe from both the University of Pennsylvania, the Chicago Museum, and the London Museum in Britain, said that there's only one place on the face of the earth where all of the elements necessary for something like this to happen could take place, and that is at the Dead Sea.

It's the only place where all of the chemicals that would be necessary for someone actually to be encrusted with salt as the gases and so forth blew out of that area from the fire, the only place it could happen is there. Now, Josephus says 2,000 years ago, as he wrote, that there was a particular pillar there that was identified as Lot's wife, that the Arabs of the desert knew it. The church fathers mention a particular pillar that was Lot's wife.

Ancient writers, before Josephus, said that she was actually visible under the salt, encrusted with salt. Now, we have no historic validity of that. Again, I think it would be a wonderful archaeological discovery for somebody to be working down there, digging salt, and all of a sudden find this woman in there.

You know, it would speak volumes to people, I think. There is the mountain of salt, Jebel Uzdu. We've been there a number of times that some identify with Lot's wife, but it's 700 feet high and 5 miles long.

I know she wasn't that big. And again, I take note of that verse. It's just kind of the Holy Spirit lays it in there.

Lot's wife looked back from behind and became a pillar of salt. No doubt Lot and his daughters finding out later as they went back to look and see what happened to her. Now, I think the record is there because Jesus will pick that up in Luke 17 verse 32 and say three words.

We have 15 words about Lot's wife there in the King James. Three words in the New Testament. Remember Lot's wife.

The tenses in the Greek are be constantly remembering Lot's wife. And again, I don't know about you, but I don't go around constantly remembering Lot's wife. I try to remember my wife.

She thinks I should remember her more. I don't go around constantly remembering Lot's wife. And yet that's an exhortation that Jesus gives not to women.

It's not just a lesson for wives, but wives take note. It's not just a lesson for wives because Jesus is speaking to the disciples. And He couches that statement in a teaching of the last days where He says, As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man.

As it was in the days of Lot, they were eating and drinking and marrying and planting and building until fire fell from heaven and consumed them. Remember Lot's wife. He who seeks to save his wife shall lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.

Jesus couches it in that teaching so that this exhortation to remember Lot's wife applies more to our generation than any generation in the church that has ever lived because it's couched in the teaching of those that will see the last days. And the interesting thing is this. We look at the situation in the Sudan today and in Central Africa and in Bosnia.

We look at horrendous conditions around the world. And for many of those Christians, they're thinking, Come Lord Jesus. This is so painful.

And so the land is ravaged. Two million dead in Sudan, a million wandering. You see some of the pictures of our involvement there in the missions in Sudan.

But the exhortation in regards to Lot's wife is given to people who are marrying and building their housing starts and are planting vineyards and orchards. That exhortation comes to people who are living in a prosperous situation. And you know, when Jesus comes and interrupts human history, not everyone will be suffering.

There will be those who are living with a decent standard. And the exhortation to them is be remembering Lot's wife. She left Sodom with her faculties, but she was judged because of her heart.

It was in her mind that morning that she left Sodom, but it was in her heart that she lingered. It was with her intellect that she agreed with God and left, but it was in the longing of her heart that she died. And that is why the scripture tells us, and this is an exhortation for us as Christians, that to guard our hearts with all diligence because from our heart comes the issues of life.

In other words, what you end up doing in life will come from your heart and not just from your intellect. Because all of us know Christian men and women, greatly intelligent, high intellect, who are living in compromise, living in sin. They can say, oh, I'm evangelical.

Yes, I believe the Lord's coming. And they can talk the talk, but you look at their lives and you see the compromise. And that is because it's from the heart, not from the brain, that the issues of life will come forth.

And if you have a divided heart this evening, if you're a Christian and you're playing with the world, you're playing with fornication, you're playing with drugs, you're playing with sin, if you let that turn over and over again in your heart, be guaranteed that the heart will always make a convert of the mind. And when we have people come in for counseling, they have the most lame excuses in the entire world of why they're living in sin or their family's falling apart or their children are suffering or their husband or their wife. And they've made all kinds of, you know, rationalizations to get their theology to fit the longing of their heart, which is towards sin.

The heart is desperately wicked. So we're told to guard our heart with all diligence. In these last days, you and I should be in the Word.

We should be in prayer. We should be seeking God for His Holy Spirit, because there's a little bit of Lot's wife in all of us. And there's a little bit in all of us that would look back sometimes at the world and say, you know, it was easier then.

It wasn't. And again, we have selective memory, like the children of Israel, as they're delivered through the Red Sea, standing in the wilderness of sin, where it's parched and it's dry. It says they look back, and on a clear day, you can see across the northern part of the Red Sea, you can see Goshen, where it's lush and green from the wilderness of sin.

And it says they remembered the flesh pots and the fish and the onions and the garlic. For some reason, they didn't remember the taskmaster's whip. They'd remember the brick kilns and the ovens and the tears and the death.

And for some reason, as Christians, when we struggle sometimes and we look back and think it was easier then, we remember, you know, everything that was sugarcoated. We don't remember the tears and the emptiness. We should be saying to ourselves, been there, done that.

There's nothing back there. We have already been there. We were saved out of that.

And all of the things that we thought were wonderful were sugarcoated, like Lot's wife was glazed over with salt. And as soon as you get beneath that little bit of sweetness, there's the poison and the emptiness and the struggle. But it's funny that we can look back sometimes and not remember how empty and painful it was and say it was easier.

It was not easier then. That's ridiculous. That is a ridiculous idea.

So, take it as an exhortation as God's children. You know, we should be in God's word because it says that the word, you know, sanctifies us. Sanctify us, John 17, 17, by thy truth, thy word is truth.

It says if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse, to catharize us. Unpleasant experience, physically. But to catharize our hearts, our lives from all unrighteousness.

That if we stay in his word and we stay in his presence, that he deals with our hearts. If we turn away from him in disassociation is where our weakness and our fall will come. But all of us, you know, in our mind we have the warning, in our mind we know it's the last days, in our mind, whatever our position, we know this world is changing.

And we're kind of beginning on our sojourn, our pilgrimage with our mind, but we have to be careful that our hearts are not longing and looking back after that place. Let's stand and pray together. Because, you know, this world is under the same sentence of eternal fire, that the same very, same fire that fell on Sodom will fall again.

And we have the information, more information. And I think we should set our hearts to seek him. Father, we look to you.

Lord, we remember not Lot's wife in the sense of who she was, we don't know, but in the lesson of her life. Lord, you say you have no pleasure in those who draw back. Lord, you tell us that any man who looks

back after putting his hand to the plow is not fit.

Lord, can't plow straight. Lord, we look to you. We know ourselves too well.

But, Lord, the important thing is we know you. You are our shepherd and you are faithful and you are gracious, Lord. And you, no doubt, probably have sent angels to pull us out of circumstance, Lord, we were not even aware of it.

And we look to you this evening. We thank you that we are under a new covenant, the covenant in the blood of your Son, Father, that is sufficient. And that now you are the God that calls things that are not as though they were.

And, Father, that you can look at us and see your very righteousness and holiness upon us through Christ. And pronounce upon us the fact that we are justified, sanctified and glorified. We praise you for that.

Lord, don't let us be a saved person with a wasted life. Let us live for you, Lord, and be fruitful in these last days. Lord, we believe we are praying according to your will.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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