

*First Things – Genesis*

**Genesis 19**

**“When the Saved Live in Sodom”**

**1. YOU CANNOT EVADE THE CORRUPTION**

A. It will attack you

B. It will affect you

**2. YOU CANNOT ENGAGE THE CULTURE**

A. You won't be able to confront it

B. You won't be able to convince it

**3. YOU CANNOT ESCAPE THE CONSEQUENCES**

A. The effects on his faith

B. The effects on his family

1. Half of the world's 6 billion people now live in cities. Up until 2008, that had never been the case. By 2050, it is estimated that two-thirds of the population will have made the move from rural to urban life.

2. Back in Genesis 13, when Abraham's nephew, Lot, was given the choice of where he would live, he decided to move his family near the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

3. As the narrative moved forward, it was not long before Lot had moved from the suburbs right into the heart of the city.

4. In Genesis 19, we read of the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by the judgment of God. Though Lot was spared by the mercy of God, he did not get out completely unscathed.

5. II Peter 2 offers an interesting commentary on the life of Lot. There the apostle describes Lot as being "just", or literally "a righteous man".

6. Yet, he says that Lot was "vexed" by his city life. He wrote, "*(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)*" (II Peter 2:8)

7. The story of Lot living in Sodom is an important passage for those of us living in this present world.

8. The Word of God teaches us that while we are in this world, we are to be separate from it. There is to be a distance and a difference between the saved and the sinfulness of a world headed for destruction and judgment.

9. Unfortunately, too many believers today are living as Lot did long ago. They have settled well within the city limits of a sinful society. They are embedded in its ways and surrounded with its wickedness.

10. R. Kent Hughes says that Lot is, "...the prototype and paradigm of so many believers today."<sup>i</sup> Unfortunately, he is right, and because of that, it would do us all well to heed the warnings of the text before us.

11. What happens when the saved live in Sodom? What happens to believers who get too close and too cozy with the sinful world around them?

12. I think we see in this chapter some of what vexed the soul of Lot while living in Sodom. Notice what his story teaches us. First of all, he reminds us that when you live too close to the things of this world:

### **I. YOU CANNOT EVADE THE CORRUPTION**

1. Verse one of this chapter tells us that two of the heavenly visitors who had eaten at Abraham's now appeared at the gate of Sodom just before evening.

2. Lot greeted them much as his uncle had in the previous chapter. He offered his home to them, and a meal.

3. Initially, the two angels refused, saying they would sleep in the city square, but the Bible says that Lot, "...pressed upon them greatly..."

4. Lot knew full well what would happen to strangers on the streets of Sodom at night. So he brought them into his house, and shut the door.

5. It is as if Lot felt that somehow he could protect them inside his home from the vileness of the city around him.

6. What he discovered is that when you live in Sodom, you cannot get away from the sin, even in your own home. Notice what I mean. In Sodom, you cannot evade the corruption, because:

#### **A. It will attack you**

1. What transpires in verses 3 through 9 is one of the most shocking and disturbing scenes in the entire Bible. Look at verses 4 and 5.

2. It says, "*But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.*"

3. The phrase, “that we may know them” is a delicate reference to a sexual encounter. Essentially, the entire male population of the city was demanding that Lot send his visitors out to be gang raped.
4. If that disturbs you, it should. There is a reason God destroyed these cities. The Judge of all the earth did right.
5. Depravity had reached its ugly pinnacle in this community, and now it was beating on the door of Lot’s house.
6. You see; when you choose to live too close and too cozy with the sinful world around you, just as you have made yourself at home in it, it will eventually try to make itself at home in you!
7. You cannot live in the fire without getting burned, and if you settle in the Sodom of *this* society, you will wake up one day and find it attacking you and your home with an aggression like you never imagined.
8. Lot reminds us that you cannot evade the corruption when you live in Sodom. Not only will it attack you, but notice also that:

#### **B. It will affect you**

1. For a moment, Lot looks brave and noble, as he stands outside the door of his house and tries to turn away the angry, lustful Sodomites.
2. In verse 7, Lot says, *“I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.”* He appears to be protesting. However, what he says in verse 8 reveals that his values were not that much higher than the mob around him.
3. Look at verse 8. Lot said, *“Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes...”*
4. One writer says, “My emotional response to Lot here is probably pretty much like yours. What a disgusting little man.”<sup>ii</sup>
5. It appears that though Lot is still characterized as a “just” man, as Peter says, his moral compass has been sadly affected by the culture around him.
6. When we live so close to the depravity and wickedness of this world, we will eventually be affected by it. Our standards will fall to those of the people closest to us.

7. The old preacher and author, Griffith Thomas, put it this way. He said, "A ship in the water is perfectly right, but the water in the ship would be perfectly wrong. The Christian in the world is right and necessary, but the world in the Christian is wrong and disastrous."<sup>iii</sup>

8. Lot's story reminds us that while we must live in this world, we had better be separate from it, or the time will come when we can no longer evade the corruption of it. It will come to us and become a part of us.

9. Notice a second lesson we learn from Lot. He teaches us that when you live in Sodom, *you cannot evade the corruption*, and furthermore:

## **II. YOU CANNOT ENGAGE THE CULTURE**

1. God's people are supposed to be salt and light in this world. We are supposed to influence the culture around us, rather than being influenced by it.

2. Yet, after years of living in Sodom, when Lot finally tries to stand up to the sinful culture around him, he has no voice. No one will listen to him.

3. In much the same way, if you and I live closely and comfortably amid the depravity of this society, we will eventually lose any ability to engage this culture with the gospel.

4. Let me show you what I mean. Notice Lot in this text, and understand that if you live too long in the Sodom of this world:

### **A. You won't be able to confront it**

1. Look again at Lot's protest in verse 7. He said, "*I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.*" Literally, Lot said, "I beg you, do not act so wicked!"

2. Notice their response in verse 9. "*And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them.*"

3. They said, "This guy has come to live among *us*, in *our* world, and now he wants to judge us! We will handle him!"

4. In other words, because Lot had quietly accepted their culture for so long, now he had no pulpit from which to preach.

5. Likewise, if you and I live too long and too close to the wickedness of this world, we will lose our voice when we try to protest it and confront it.

6. For instance, the church in America has no leg to stand on when we speak of the sanctity of marriage. Divorce rates among evangelicals are equal to that of the rest of the population.
7. We cannot speak out against the consumerism and selfish wealth of our society when most of us are drowning in debt trying to keep up with standard of living we call the American Dream.
8. The world doesn't care to hear anything about our values when we are living on a steady diet of the very same culture as they are.
9. When the church is filled with the same kinds of vice, hatred, strife, and selfishness as the lost society, we lose our ability to confront the sin in the world around us.
10. If you choose to live in Sodom, you cannot engage it for Christ, because you won't be able to confront it. Furthermore, notice that:

**B. You won't be able to convince it**

1. Look now at verse 12. After the angels rescued Lot from the mob outside by striking them with blindness, they gave Lot these instructions: *"Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place."*
2. In other words, they told Lot to warn his family that judgment was coming. He was to urge them to flee that coming wrath.
3. Notice verse 14. It says, *"And Lot went out, and spake 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 sons in law."*
4. Lot said to his sons in law, "Run! Now! The city is going to be destroyed!" Yet, they thought he was only joking. They didn't take his warning seriously.
5. Griffith Thomas said, "His testimony had no power. He had lived too long as one of them...without any very real difference, to allow his message to be of any avail."<sup>iv</sup>
6. Lot had demonstrated no fear of God or judgment prior to this day. Why should they believe him now?
7. When we as Christians speak to the world about hell and judgment, we had better live like we believe those exist if we expect them to believe us!

8. When you witness to your friends and family about sin and its penalty, if you have never lived any differently than them, they will not take you seriously.
9. It does us no good to cry like Chicken Little that the sky is falling when we've been sunbathing under it all day.
10. Lot's life *in* Sodom cost him his testimony *to* Sodom when it mattered the most.
11. Looking at this passage, Lot's life warns of living entrenched in the sinful world around us. When you do so, *you cannot evade the corruption and you cannot engage the culture.*
12. Lastly, when the saved live in Sodom, we learn that:

### **III. YOU CANNOT ESCAPE THE CONSEQUENCES**

1. Over in II Peter 2, where the apostle comments on Lot, he says in verse 9, "*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.*"
2. Though Lot was entrenched in Sodom and its culture, the Lord was still able to deliver him from the destruction that came upon those cities.
3. Look at verses 15 and 16 of our text in Genesis. It says, "*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. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.*"
4. The story of Lot is really a story about the amazing, longsuffering mercy of God. Those He saves will be saved absolutely from the judgment that is to come. They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of the Father's hand.
5. Yet, though Lot and his family were taken out of Sodom, not all of the Sodom was taken out of them.
6. As Lot fled from the fumes of the fire from his adopted city, he faced bitter consequences from his time spent living there.
7. Likewise, the longer you and I live too close to this sinful world, the more we will feel the bitter consequences of its influence upon us.

8. Notice this truth in our text. As Lot fled from the city, we see the consequences of his life there, first of all, in:

**A. The effects on his faith**

1. Once the angels had literally dragged Lot and his family outside of the gates of the city, they gave them instructions to run for their lives into the mountains.
2. Yet, look at how Lot responds to these instructions in verse 18. He said, "*Oh, not so, my Lord.*" Then in verse 19, Lot asks if he can be allowed to simply flee into one of the neighboring cities!
3. In another token of God's mercy, Lot is granted this request, and the city is spared because of him.
4. Nevertheless, what is wrong with this man!? Why would he want to remain anywhere near the place where fire and brimstone are falling from heaven, and people are being melted alive?
5. One writer said, "Not even brimstone will make a pilgrim of him: he must have a little Sodom again if life is to be supportable."<sup>v</sup> Another commentator says that, "...urban life had its icy fingers around his throat."<sup>vi</sup>
6. Lot's faith and relationship with God were damaged and deformed from all the time he had spent in the cesspool of Sodom.
7. I warn you friend, the longer you live close proximity to the wickedness of this world the harder it is for God to break you away from it.
8. I am afraid that too many believers today have become addicted to the ways of this world. So much so, that even if God were to rain down fire upon their house, they would try to rush in and rescue their flat screens and DVDs.
9. When the saved lived in Sodom, one of the consequences is the effect that life will have upon their faith.
10. Furthermore, as we look at this text, we see that Lot escaped from Sodom, but he could not escape from:

**B. The effects on his family**

1. The story of Lot reminds us that we do not live as islands. Our choices will always affect the people closest to us; especially our families.

2. We see this firstly in Lot's wife. Though the angels had specifically instructed them *not* to look back as they fled, she did, and the Bible says in verse 26 that, "...she became a pillar of salt."

3. The idea is that she became a victim of the very judgment she turned to see.

4. Not only was his wife affected, but the chapter closes by revealing how much of Sodom's corruption had entered the hearts of his children.

5. The last scene in Lot's scriptural story is almost as appalling as the Sodomite mob at his door the night before.

6. Verses 31 through 36 records that Lot's daughters, fearful that all the men had been destroyed, conspired to intoxicate their father and commit incest with him.

7. The descendants born from that profane episode proved to be a wicked and vile people, the Moabites and the Ammonites.

8. Reading this account, every Christian parent ought to shudder to think of how much of this world has *already* infected the minds of their children.

9. Lot escaped the destruction of Sodom, but he never escaped the damage of it. The consequences of his life there followed him and his family for the rest of their days.

1. Sodom and Gomorrah may seem like it is an eternity and a million miles away. But it is not.

2. To some degree, the very wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah is alive and well in the society in which you and I presently live. It is all around us.

3. What is the answer, then? If we do not wish to live in Sodom as Lot did, how do we live separate from it even while being surrounded by it?

4. I think, as always, the answer is found by looking to Jesus. Hebrews 7:26 says of Him, "*For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners...*"

5. Though Jesus was a friend of sinners, He still managed to be separate from them and undefiled by them.

6. Only as we allow Him to live His life through us, guiding our steps and guarding our hearts, can we have any hope of living in this world, but not being of this world.

7. A life of Christian separation is not about rules and regulations, legalism or isolationism.
  
8. A life of Christian separation is lived by loving Jesus more than anything else, and being devoted to His glory and His kingdom *more* than we are attracted to a world headed for destruction.
  
9. We may have to live near Sodom, but with the help of Christ, the saved don't have to live *in* Sodom.

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<sup>i</sup> Hughes, R. Kent, Genesis: Beginning and Blessing, (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 2004), p. 272

<sup>ii</sup> Hughes, R. Kent, p. 272

<sup>iii</sup> Thomas, W.H. Griffith, Genesis I-XXV: A Devotional Commentary, (The Religious Tract Society, London, 1907), p. 231

<sup>iv</sup> Thomas, W.H. Griffith, p. 228

<sup>v</sup> Hughes, R. Kent, p. 274

<sup>vi</sup> Anders, Max, Holman Old Testament Commentary: Genesis, (B&H Publishing Group, Nashville, TN, 2002), *Amazon Kindle Edition*