

A Holy God and a Sinful World

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- [0 : 00] I definitely avoid preaching on passages like this. It's pretty awful. It's not nice. But I also find myself feeling really thankful that as a church, we work through books.
- We work through sections of books, often chapter by chapter. And that means that whoever's preaching can't just choose nice passages, can't just choose passages that they really like.
- But it means that we're forced to spend time in passages that are messy, like Genesis 19. And I want to be upfront.
- There are things in this chapter that I find really difficult. There's things that I don't like to speak about. There's things I don't like to think about in this chapter.
- It's going to be true for all of us this morning. It's going to be particularly hard probably for others as well. But I hope that even though it is hard, even though it is messy, that we can find comfort in knowing that actions like this are hated and are judged by the God that we serve.
- [1 : 14] And so even though it's probably not anyone's favorite chapter, chapter, it's in the Bible and it's there to teach us a lot of things. The Apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Romans, chapter 15, verse 4, he says, For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope.
- And so that means that Genesis 19 was written for our instruction and so that we might have hope. And we'll see both of those things as we work through this chapter together.
- If you were here last week, we spent time looking at chapter 18, where the main focus was thinking of Abraham and his friendship with the Lord, how he welcomed the Lord and showed him hospitality.
- And this week our focus shifts from Abraham onto his nephew, Lot. The two angels who visited Abraham with the Lord, they went ahead of the Lord to Sodom.
- And in verse 1 of our chapter, we see there that they arrive in Sodom. The question really on our minds as readers following the end of chapter 18 is will they find any righteous in Sodom so that the city will be spared?
- [2 : 35] It's a big chapter. There's a lot going on in this chapter, so there are going to be, I'm sure, questions left unanswered. And so if you afterwards want anything clarified, you want to ask anything, do it, just come and grab me or Ali, preferably Ali.
- No, I'm only joking. Please don't go away with the things you want to ask. I'm going to work through the chapter in three sections. I'm going to give you the headings up front.
- First, we're going to think about the world that Lot lived in. Secondly, the person that Lot had become. And then thirdly, we'll finish by thinking about the faithful uncle that Lot had.
- I'll mention them again as we work through. But I suppose the reason, just to give them up front, is because I'm intentionally not going to say all that much about Lot in the first point.

And so now you know that that's because we're going to speak about Lot in the second point. We're going to think about the world around Lot himself, and finishing with his uncle Abraham.

[3 : 41] Be a bit of overlap through the points. Hopefully having some kind of structure would be helpful for us. So firstly, the world that Lot lived in. We read last week that the sin of Sodom was very great.

And we see here in this chapter that that wasn't an exaggeration. Sodom was a complete mess. It was true wickedness going on in Sodom.

The sinfulness of the city, it's revealed to us in these verses. The world Lot lived in was appalling. We read in verse 2 that Lot, he begs the two angels to come and to stay at his home, leave early in the morning to go on their way.

But the two, they say that they'll go to the town square, where they would meet people, would be busy. The people of Sodom would be there. But verse 3, Lot, he pressed them strongly, we're told.

Lot is forceful here. And he wants them to stay at his house and he wants them to leave early in the morning. Meaning that they'll not meet anyone from Sodom.

[4 : 52] And so the question I think we should be asking is, why is Lot so desperate to keep these visitors hidden? Why is he so desperate they don't go to the town square and meet anyone from Sodom?

And it's because Lot knows exactly what happens to visitors in Sodom. Lot knows what the world he lives in is like.

But word gets out that Lot has hidden these visitors from the men of Sodom. Verse 4 and 5 we read, But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house.

And they called to Lot, where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them. Of course, the word here, know, it's not speaking about being introduced and having a chat, getting to know people like that.

And it's made clear really by Lot's response when he offers them his virgin daughters to do to them as they please. We'll come back to that and Lot saying that in the next point.

[6 : 10] But this is a shocking offer. It's a shocking world that Lot is living in. The demand from the men of Sodom, young and old, is send these visitors out so that we can rape them.

This act of homosexual rape, it wasn't something that one or two men engaged in, in the city.

This had the backing of the entire city. This is a city that is steeped in sexual perversion.

It's passed down through generations. The old men teaching the young men that this is how we treat visitors. This is a city that's lawless.

It's barbaric. And the Lord himself hated what Sodom was like. This is why the city was destroyed.

[7 : 12] The Lord punishes evil. And I'm glad that we serve a God who isn't indifferent to things like this.

We serve a God who judges and condemns such actions. The men of Sodom, they refuse Lot's offer of his daughters.

And they threaten not just to rape his visitors, but now they say they're going to deal even worse with Lot than the visitors. The men, they manage to pull Lot inside the house to safety.

And then they explain that this city is going to be destroyed. The world that Lot lived in, it would not remain standing. And now I know that we're all sat here, we're shocked, we're appalled by this chapter, by the world that Lot lived in.

But let's not be completely naive. The things that are going on in this chapter, they're examples of just how awful and low humanity can and does sink.

[8 : 23] There's nothing going on in this chapter that's completely foreign to the world that we live in. Perhaps it's not on our doorstep, but we hear on the news, we see through history the depths that humanity sinks to.

Not saying that as a community we are steeped in sexual perversion like the Sodomites. Of course we're not. But the seeds of this sexual immorality are alive and kicking in our hearts.

Our sexual immorality, it looks different, granted, it's not as shocking, but it doesn't mean that we're innocent. The fact that pornography is so easily accessible and so frequently accessed in every community around us highlights that these seeds of Sodom are in our hearts.

I'm not going to ask for a show of hands here, but I'm confident that if you're sat in this room this morning and you've never looked at magazines, at pictures, at videos of pornography, then you're very much in the minority.

The seeds of Sodom, therefore, are in this room. Those moments when you look at someone or you think about someone lustfully who isn't your spouse, that too is sexual sin.

[9 : 58] The point I'm making is that although our sexual sin isn't like Sodom's, it's still an issue for us. I'm not going to keep laboring at this point.

I'm sure it's making all of us a little bit uncomfortable. But what I've been really struck by this week, it's not that sexual sin is prevalent in our community, but it's that we're too ashamed to speak about it.

The stats on the number of people who watch pornography are terrifying. And yet, within the church, people feel like they can't speak about it. Satan has managed to communicate to convince people that if they tell others their deepest, darkest struggles, then they'll be shunned from the church.

But that's not true. It's a complete lie. We're here to bear each other's burdens. Not to go shouting from the rooftops about what we struggle with, but we need to have people that we can speak to honestly.

And we need to make others aware that they can speak to us honestly without fear of being judged. That's so needed in a world where it's so easy to hide so much.

[11 : 22] Jesus himself, he speaks about the city of Sodom in the New Testament in Matthew 11. And as we all think just now, as we all reflect upon just how shocking the sin was in Sodom, but Jesus says in Matthew 11 that there's something worse than the sin of Sodom.

Let me read from Matthew 11, verse 23 and 24. Jesus here is, he's denouncing cities where he had been, where he had done mighty works, and these cities had still not repented.

He says, you, you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you. He says to Capernaum, that if Sodom had encountered Jesus the way that they had, then even Sodom would have repented and would still have been standing.

It will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for those who have come face to face with the works and truths of Jesus but have not repented.

[13 : 01] And so Jesus says, if you're sat here this morning, and you have heard about him, you have encountered his mighty works through the pages of scripture, if you've been told of the reality of all that he's done through his life, death, and resurrection to secure salvation for sinners, and you've not responded by placing your trust in him, it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the people of Sodom than for you.

That is stark. That is sobering. But it's also a plea. Jesus pleads that the day of judgment would be tolerable for all of us.

He desires that all people would place their trust in him and be saved, shielded from the coming judgment. And so don't make the same mistake of those in Capernaum who rejected Christ.

Trust in him. Repent of your sin. This world we live in will only lead us to an eternity separated from Christ.

And so look to him instead. Look to Jesus who came into this world in order to save us from it. The world that Lot lived in.

[14 : 39] And now secondly the person that Lot had become. The person that Lot had become. Lot is described as righteous in the New Testament.

So Lot was a genuine believer. Might not seem overly apparent in these verses. Lot's been so spiritually compromised because of the world that he lived in.

but it was a gradual process happened through several seemingly small decisions. If you've been with us through this whole series you'll remember that Lot chose the area to go and live that was near the Jordan River where Sodom was.

And he knew that the men of Sodom were wicked. In Genesis 13 verse 13 we read there that Lot moved his tent as far as Sodom.

The languages of his tent being just outside Sodom. Perhaps looking on at Sodom. And then in chapter 14 verse 12 the author tells us that Lot was now dwelling in Sodom.

[15 : 55] And then in our chapter Lot is now sitting at the gate of Sodom. That means that he had become really one of the elders of the town. A man who not just lived there but a man who influenced Sodom.

He had a wife and family. Gradually each step took him further and further away from the Lord as he was compromised spiritually.

The result is awful. He lives in a city that he knows is wicked but he becomes part of it. We see how awful he's become and that he knew how visitors were treated and yet he stayed and took part in all of it.

His response in verse 8 shows us the kind of man that he had become when he says, Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you.

Do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men for they've come under the shelter of my roof. What on earth are you doing Lot?

[17 : 04] How could a father beg the men of the town to do to his daughters as they please? Lot has become so wicked, so infiltrated by the world that he lived in.

Even as he told his sons-in-law to flee for the Lord was going to destroy the place, he didn't listen to him. Verse 14, because they thought he was joking.

He couldn't be trusted. And yet Lot doesn't want to leave that awful place. The angels, they tell him to hurry, leave the city, it's going to be destroyed.

Verse 16, but he lingered. He lingered. He didn't want to go. Lot loved Sodom.

Then in verse 20, he doesn't want to flee too far from what has become his home. He begs that he can just go to a nearby place.

[18 : 12] Verse 20, this city is near enough to flee to it, it's a little one. He loved Sodom. So did his Sodomite wife. So much so that even as they were escaping to safety, even as they were being saved, she did what the angels told them not to do.

She looked back at her beloved city, her beloved wicked city. She took her eyes off the rescue, away from safety, and she looked to her wicked home.

She was turned to a pillar salt. How foolish to take her eyes away from the safe destination and look back to such a wicked place.

And yet how easy is it to do? How easy is it for us to take our eyes off the safety of Christ, off the destination that his rescue has taken us and look back to the things of this world, to be drawn back in by the brokenness, to look away from Christ and to trip as we gossip about people, as we look away from Christ and look lustfully at someone who's not our spouse.

How easy is it to lose sight of our salvation and to have our vision engulfed by worthless and wicked things?

[19 : 56] Don't be like Lot's wife. Don't let your gaze slip from your beautiful saviour to this ugly world. But when our gaze does slip, when we do make that mistake, let it be brief and look back to Christ, knowing that he welcomes us back with open arms, repent quickly and pray for strength to stand firm.

Don't follow bad decisions with more bad decisions like Lot who ended up as a man of influence in Sodom.

Instead, follow one bad decision with a repentant heart. And remember that our decisions have huge consequences for our children and for our children's children.

I think that's the point of the verses at the end of the chapter. The scene where Lot's daughters get Lot drunk and become pregnant by their father.

In that scene, it all seemed too easy. The person that Lot has become clearly took very little convincing to get so drunk that he wouldn't even know that he had sex with his daughters.

[21 : 24] But I think what those verses teach us on a simple level is that decisions we make impact our children. Sodom so clearly lived in Lot's daughters.

They think this is a great idea. They don't see the wickedness of what they're doing. Because their dad was happy enough to bring them up in the city of Sodom, the city of gross sexual perversion, and he blended right in rather than living distinctively, that influenced them.

And even the children that they had became long-standing enemies of the Lord's people. Lot's bad decisions negatively influenced his descendants.

And so the question for those here who are parents, are you making decisions that are good for your children and for their walk with the Lord?

Do your children look at your life and see the Lord and your walk with Him as a priority in your life?

[22 : 40] Do they see you prioritizing gathering with the Lord's people on a Sunday over other things? Or is the Lord and your walk with Him something that just kind of fits around the rest of your life when it's convenient for you?

Those are challenging questions, but they're important questions, and there's right and wrong answers to those questions. It's worth really thinking about seriously.

It's worth praying about, and it's worth speaking to other people about as well. These are hard questions, but they're really important questions to be getting the right answers.

two in all of our lives. The world that Lot lived in, the person that Lot had become, thirdly, and this will just be a really brief point, thirdly and finally, the faithful uncle that Lot had, the faithful uncle that Lot had.

Why was Lot saved? Not because he was really good and faithful, not because when he was told to flee, he jumped obediently and ran to safety.

[24 : 09] He lingered. He wanted to stay. He loved Sodom. Lot was dragged, basically kicking and screaming to safety.

verse 16, but he lingered so the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand. And the Lord being merciful to him, they brought him out and set him outside the city.

They seized him. That is how he was saved. And they did it because of Lot's faithful uncle who prayed for him and through whom he enjoyed covenant blessings as part of God's covenant community.

Verse 29 tells us why Lot was saved. We read there, so it was that when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.

This wicked city was destroyed and judged because that was right and just.

[25 : 29] The Lord rained sulfur and fire on Sodom and destroyed it. It must have been an incredible picture of God's wrath being poured out.

And it's a picture of God's wrath that is pointing forward to a greater day of judgment to the end of time when all people will face God's wrath and be judged for how they've lived.

Everyone has fallen short of God's standard. The Bible tells us that it won't just be a city that God's wrath falls upon. This whole world that we live in is under the Lord's judgment and the only way to avoid the coming judgment is similar to how Lot avoided the judgment on Sodom.

It's through the righteousness of another. It's not through our faithful uncle but it's through our faithful elder brother the Lord Jesus Christ whom the Lord's wrath was poured out upon at the cross like fire and sulfur.

God's wrath reigned upon Christ because of our wickedness. And through Christ we have this great promise that this broken messy world will be made new.

[27 : 12] The world that we live in it is passing away. And that's a good thing because it's not how it should be. This passage is awful but it makes us groan for the new creation for a day when all things are going to be made right.

This world will be judged and we as those who trust in the work of our faithful elder brother we will enter the new heavens and the new earth where things will be perfect where there will be no more crying no more pain no more death no more tears because the things in this chapter the broken things around us that we see all those things the former things will have passed away.

Let's pray together. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Father God we give you thanks for your word give you thanks that it's so real about life that nothing's airbrushed out of it to make it more palatable!

But the truth is recorded and it's recorded for our good and we thank you that even in this horrible passage horrible things there's so much to instruct us and so much to give us hope as that great judgment upon Sodom and its wickedness points us forward to a day when you will judge all wickedness when all things will be brought to account and we thank you that on that day of judgment if we do place our trust in our elder brother in the Lord Jesus we will be shielded from that judgment and we will be welcomed into the new creation where things will be as they should things will be very good we long for that day we are hearts in this broken world grown for that day and we ask that until that day that you would help us to be faithful as your people that you would help us to live faithfully in response to what you've done for us and that you would help us not be drawn in and influenced infiltrated by the world in which we live but instead that you would help us to live distinctively as your people for your glory we ask that in

Jesus name Amen heard