
GENESIS: IT ALL STARTS HERE

RESCUE FROM THE CITY OF DESTRUCTION

GENESIS 18:16-19:29

18:16 Then the men [two men, who were manifestations of angels, and one who was a manifestation of the LORD] set out from there, and they looked down toward Sodom. And Abraham went with them to set them on their way.

20 Then the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know."

So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD.

Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

And the LORD said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?"

And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there."

Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose forty are found there."

He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it."

Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there."

He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there."

He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there."

He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it."

Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there."

He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it."

And the LORD went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.

19:1 The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth and said, "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet..." 3b And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

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."

Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof."

But they said, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door down. But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door. And they struck with blindness the men who were at the entrance of the house, both small and great, so that they wore themselves out groping for the door.

12 Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it."

So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, "Up! Get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city." But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

15 As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city." But he lingered.

So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. And as they brought them out, one said, "Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away."

23 The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar. Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. 26 But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.

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.

INTRODUCTION

The events surrounding the destruction of great ancient cities are fascinating and sobering. Sodom and Gomorrah are notorious cities, and even non-Christians know something of the biblical storyline. However, the big picture does not focus on what the distracted reader might think. In fact, it may surprise you that this is a story of God's gracious ability to save in the midst of awful judgment. In this message, we will look at the way the whole Bible understands the account of Sodom and Gomorrah, and we will hear a message of both warning and rescue.

MESSAGE OUTLINE:

- (1) SODOM & GOMORRAH: HISTORICAL NARRATIVE & UNIVERSAL APPLICATION**
- (2) GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGEMENT AND GRACIOUS RESCUE**
- (3) LOT'S VARYING RESPONSES AND CONSIDERING OUR OWN**

(1) SOD & GOM: HISTORICAL NARRATIVE & UNIVERSAL APPLICATION

◆ SODOM & GOMORRAH WERE COMPLETELY OFF THE RAILS

● **The testimony of God against Sodom & Gomorrah**

- “their sin is very grave” (Gen. 18:20).
 - Grave – burdensome, weighty
- For the sake of ANY righteous ones, God would have withheld judgment from S&G; but there were none.
 - Abraham’s intercession (mediatorial prayer) is rightly understood as a plea for Lot and his family.
 - While Peter refers to Lot as a “righteous” man, this in no way refers to his personal righteousness (2 Pet. 2:8).
 - Lot’s arrival in Sodom was motivated by selfish ambition and greed (Gen. 13:10-11).
 - Lot fully integrates with the sinful society of Sodom (he is “sitting in the gate,” which indicates political authority [Gen. 19:1]).
 - Lot even begs to remain among an associated city as these are being destroyed (Gen. 19:17-20)!
 - Lot’s daughters sinfully conceive children, and these are the beginning of two peoples that are recurring problems in Israel’s future (Gen. 19:30-38).
 - Lot’s escape is assured, and the angels even claim that God had commanded that Lot and his family leave before judgment befalls Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:22).

● **The testimony of Lot**

- Lot urges the angels to hide from the townsmen immediately upon their arrival (Gen. 19:2-3).
- Lot begs the townsmen to refrain from greater wickedness (Gen. 19:7).

- **The testimony of the angels**
 - “the **outcry against its people** has become great before the LORD” (Gen. 19:13).

- **The testimony of the townsmen against themselves**
 - Every male of the city demanded sexual indulgence from these newcomers (Gen. 19:4-5).
 - Idolatry and sexual perversion are two major indicators of utter societal failure.
 - “Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the **glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things**. Therefore **God gave them up in the lusts** of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and **worshiped and served the creature** rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason **God gave them up to dishonorable passions**. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due **penalty for their error**” (Rom. 1:22–27).
 - The townsmen only grow angry when Lot confronts the wickedness of their desires (Gen. 19:9).
 - The Bible says that all people know what is right, and willfully rebel against it. Therefore, the voice of truth falls often falls on furious ears.
 - “Though **they know** God’s righteous decree that **those who practice such things deserve to die**, they not only **do them but give approval to those who practice them** (Rom. 1:32).
 - The townsmen even continue to pursue sin with violence after miraculous judgment [blindness] falls upon them (Gen. 19:11).
 - This demonstrates the level of commitment sinners have to sin!

- “because of your hard and impenitent heart you are **storing up wrath for yourself** on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed” (Rom. 2:5).

◆ SOD & GOM ARE IDENTIFIED WITH THE UNIVERSAL “CITY OF DESTRUCTION”

- **Judah = Sodom & Gomorrah**

- Isaiah spoke to the rebellious people of God during a time of nationwide debauchery. They were outwardly religious, but far from any true love for God. Isaiah draws a direct comparison between their depravity and that of Sodom/Gomorrah.

- “Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah!” (Is. 1:10).

- **Israel = Sodom & Gomorrah**

- In the days just prior to Isaiah, Amos spoke to the rebellious people of God during a time of worldly decadence and spiritual apostasy. They were prosperous, but they had forgotten the God who gives and takes away prosperity.

- “I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning; yet you did not return to me,’ declares the LORD. ‘Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!’ For behold, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought, who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth — the LORD, the God of hosts, is his name!” (Amos 4:11–13).

- **The Ungodly World = Sodom & Gomorrah**

- In the first century after Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension, Peter encouraged the persecuted Christians by reminding them that sin and suffering would not always be. The same Jesus who ascended will return and bring judgment upon the “ungodly.”

- “...by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he [God] condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly...” (2 Pet. 2:6).

(2) GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT AND GRACIOUS RESCUE

◆ GOD UNLEASHED RIGHTEOUS FURY ON SODOM & GOMORRAH

- The Biblical Christian cannot shy away from this reality...
 - Moses records, “**Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground**” (Ge 19:24–25)... “And [Abraham] looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward **all the land of the valley**, and he looked and, behold, **the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace. So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley**” (Ge 19:28–29).
 - **One, this was no natural disaster.**
 - This this was not an indiscriminate or impersonal catastrophe!
 - The sulfur and fire that rained was “from the LORD.” God is the one who “overthrew” those cities, and destroyed everything – down to the dirt of the ground.
 - **Two, all of S&G humans (young and old) died.**
 - The sense of the language is that God flipped the city upside-down – literally (see *haphak* | Strong’s Hebrew #2015).
 - **Three, God claims that such destruction was/is justified.**
 - God says for Himself (1) that He willfully did it, and (2) that it was right.
 - Therefore, we ought not apologize for God.
 - Indeed, it would be sinful to disavow God’s willful intent or His own testimony here.

◆ THE GOD OF THE BIBLE ALWAYS JUDGES SIN WITH RIGHTEOUS FURY

- While sin continues for a time, God’s judgment is sure.
 - The Bible tells us, in the book of Romans, that humanity is “**filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips,**

slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, [and] ruthless” (Rom. 1:29-31).

The Apostle Paul goes on to inform us of God’s sure punishment upon these kinds of things. Verse 32 says, “**Though they** [people] **know God’s righteous decree** [what righteous decree has God made that they “know”?] **that those who practice such things deserve to die...**” (Rom. 1:32).

- Jesus Himself warned of a day when He would return with both blessing and cursing.
 - Jesus will execute God’s righteous fury on the world.
 - “Behold, I am coming soon, **bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end**” (Rev. 22:12–13).

◆ THE GOD OF THE BIBLE ALWAYS SAVES BY GRACE IN THE MIDST OF JUDGMENT

- Think of the incredibly gracious statement at the close of this horrific episode!
 - “**God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived**” (Gen. 19:29).
 - Lot was rescued because “God remembered Abraham”!
 - Was Lot righteous?
 - Was Abraham the effective intercessor?
 - Was Abraham’s merit that which counted for Lot’s salvation from judgment?
 - NO!
 - “God Remembered Abraham”!
 - And, what promise did God make to Abraham?
 - Ah! The promise of an offspring and a divine inheritance!
 - Is this not a booming reminder of the Gospel of Grace?!

(3) LOT'S VARYING RESPONSES AND CONSIDERING OUR OWN

◆ LOT KNOWS GOD IS RIGHTEOUS AND SEEKS TO PROTECT HIS MESSENGERS FROM THE WORLD

- Lot meets the angelic destroyers at the gate of Sodom, and his reaction is to urge them to hide in his house.
 - Lot knows God is righteous
 - Lot knows his fellow citizens are not
 - “So,” he reasons, “I must protect the righteous from the unrighteous!”
 - What a preposterous notion!
 - Who is more fearsome, God or man?
 - Who is more powerful? Who needs protection from whom?
- Don't some of us think this same way?
 - We imagine that worldly powers are too great, worldly domains are too wicked... How can the godly survive, much less compete?
 - We forget that the battle is not ours to fight!
 - Paul said, “we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” But, “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Rom. 8:36–37).

◆ LOT FEARS GOD'S JUDGEMENT AND ACTS APPROPRIATELY

- Lot frantically tries to compel his daughters and sons-in-law to flee the wrath of God to come by trusting in the messengers.
 - Lot hears the message of judgment and rescue.
 - Lot believes the message, and makes plans to flee.
 - “So,” he reasons, “those I love must come with me!”
 - What a marvelous display!
 - God's word of judgment is trustworthy.
 - God's word of grace is true, and all who hear and believe will be saved.

- Do some of us react like this?
 - We see our friends and family carelessly walking along the streets of the City of Destruction, and we want to scream out!
 - “Don’t you know that judgment is coming!”

◆ LOT’S FAMILY THINKS HE IS AN ALARMIST

- Lot’s family hears the warning, and they are carefree.
 - Lot’s family thinks life is good.
 - They also think the warning is crazy.
 - “So,” they reason, “Lot must be joking... No need to be alarmed.”
 - Oh, what a foolish response!
 - Willfully and stubbornly Deaf and Blind, they refuse to recognize when their own destruction is at hand!
- Do some of us respond like this?
 - We have heard the warnings of God’s impending judgment, and yet we think little of them.
 - “Family, wealth, business, sports, leisure, and a host of other things in this City of Destruction are more important pursuits than the God who is absent.”

◆ LOT ABSORBS THE RIDICULE OF HIS FAMILY AND QUICKLY GROWS WEARY

- Lot starts strong, but he is quickly quieted – even lingering in Sodom himself – after he is ridiculed a bit.
 - Lot sees a negative response to his warnings.
 - He must think that his warnings might really be an overreaction.
 - “So,” he reasoned, “maybe I should get back to life as usual.”
 - What a tragedy!
 - Has God forgotten His own righteousness?
 - Has God grown powerless?
 - No! Lot, like his foolish family, presumes upon God’s grace.

- Have some of us grown weary like this?
 - We may have once pursued Christ, longed and prayed for personal holiness, and vocalized the need for repentance and trust in Christ.
 - But now, we have pulled our shoulder back from the sled.
 - We may even be frustrated when others come along with the fervor we once had... They are simply a reminder that we are weary, and maybe even selfishly lazy.

◆ LOT IS THANKFUL FOR RESCUE, BUT HE STILL LOVES THE WORLD

- Lot flees the destruction, and expresses gratitude for the gracious favor he has received, but his love for the things of this world possess him still.
 - Lot knows these “big” cities got out of hand, thus the destruction.
 - Lot knows there is a smaller city where he can rebuild his life.
 - “So,” he reasoned, “Let me go to this other city, so everything will not be a total loss.”
 - Oh, what a further tragedy...
 - Where is Lot’s blessing? With Abraham! With the LORD!
 - Where does Lot still want to be? On his own... Making his way.
- Do some of us think and act like this?
 - We say, “Thanks, God, for offering salvation! I appreciate the gift, but I would like to spend my time, treasure, and talent in pursuit of worldly things... I will be back when I’m done or when I need you.”

APPLICATION:

- (1) What is this passage asking us to believe about this world?
- (2) What is this passage asking us to believe about God’s judgment?
- (3) What is this passage asking us to believe about God’s grace?
- (4) What is this passage asking us to do with our time, treasure, and talent?

MY PRAYERS

- May God forgive us for loving the things of this world and for clinging so tightly to them.
- May God help us to devote ourselves more appropriately to godliness and Christward pursuit.
- May God embolden us to pass along His message of warning and grace to as many as we may.