



Lesson 10 | The Cost of a Compromised Faith

Genesis 19:1-38

Few stories in the Bible are as awful and sickening as Genesis 19. After reading about the up and down, but overall upward growth of Abraham's faith, we suddenly find ourselves in the middle of a city so dark that 10 righteous people can't be found. Yet in the middle of this twisted darkness is Abraham's nephew Lot, someone that the New Testament calls "a righteous man" (cf 2 Peter 2:7-8). How did a righteous person find himself in a city like Sodom? And what happens when a righteous person lives in a city of such evil? This passage is infamous as one of the primary passages dealing homosexuality in the Bible, and while that is important, there is much more to the story. This is the story of what happens when a righteous person loses their bearings and is willing to compromise on convictions for the sake of wealth and influence. It serves as a warning to all of us to beware the subtle, seductive pull of the world and it reminds us that God is a God who will judge severely and yet even in judgment will show great mercy.

Lot's Hospitality (19:1-3)

Some might wonder why spend all this time on what happened in Sodom in the middle of a bunch of stories focusing on Abraham. One of the reasons is that the Bible will often put characters side by side for us to compare them and see where they are different. For example, Genesis 18 begins by showing us the hospitality of Abraham, and Genesis 19 begins by showing us the hospitality of Lot.

Compare Genesis 18:1-8 and Genesis 19:1-3. How are Abraham and Lot similar? Are there any differences between these stories? If so, why do you think they exist?

Some people have been confused by the little statement in 2 Peter that Lot was a "righteous man." They may wonder what in the world Lot did that could be considered "righteous." At least part of the answer to that question is the hospitality of Lot. This behavior will also serve to set Lot apart from the rest of the city. While Lot will certainly have his problems, at the same time his behavior in receiving these guests will absolutely shine in comparison to what the corrupt city around him has done.

Sodom's Wickedness (19:4-9)

Sodom is often painted in Scripture as the ultimate example of wickedness, and for good reason. The wealth of the city (cf Genesis 13:10) had no doubt contributed to an arrogant, self-satisfied attitude (cf Ezekiel 16:49-50). The fact that the city was nearly conquered (cf Genesis 14) should have been seen as a wake-up call from God, and yet the citizens continued in their evil. These verses give us just a glimpse of what that evil must have looked like.

What are some of the sins of Sodom that can be seen in these verses?

Inhospitality¹

It is worth noting that Lot finds these guests in the city square in the evening. The implication there is that no one had brought these guests into their home as would have been the expected courtesy of the day. Whereas both Abraham and Lot were quick to show kindness when they saw these strangers, Sodom first ignored them, and then later sought to violently attack them.

Pride

In Ezekiel 16:49-50 God will list off the sins of Sodom and when he begins the list, He begins with the sin of pride. This pride was no doubt in part because of their lush, beautiful, and wealthy land. Remember, after all, that Lot went to Sodom because it was so appealing (cf Genesis 13:10). Ezekiel makes it clear that the great wealth of Sodom made them lazy, and the rich, lazy city of Sodom became proud. Often the blessings that God gives have a tendency to make us proud. While that pride may not have carried us as far away from God as it did for Sodom, that may only be a matter of time.

How can we, as a wealthy people, avoid the soul- and nation-destroying sin of pride?

Sexual Deviancy

Many associate the word "Sodom" with this horrific account of the men of the city who seek to sexually violate these guests. The pride, wealth, and selfishness of the city has caused their desires to twist and distort to the point where they crave sinful pleasures that should shock us. Cultures that find great wealth and power frequently fall prey to sexual rebellion, and that rebellion is often one of the seeds of destruction that will eventually spell doom for the culture. Romans 1 gives a similar downward spiral by holding up homosexuality as a powerful and vivid example of what happens when people are unthankful, proud, and self-reliant. The result is that they reject God and His truth, chase after lies, and start following their unnatural lusts.

¹ Those who try to argue that homosexuality is never condemned in the Bible will argue that the real sin of Sodom is not homosexuality but rather inhospitality. The answer to such an argument is not to discount the inhospitality of Sodom, as if that didn't matter, but to show that both are true. Yes, Sodom was inhospitable, but in the worst way possible. They not only did not put up these visitors for the evening, but they sought to degrade them in the most humiliating way possible – through homosexual rape.

How should we respond to a culture that is currently spiraling down this path of wealth, pride, ingratitude, and sexual deviancy?

Lot's actions here are both honorable and despicable at the same time. He seeks to protect those who have come under his roof, putting himself in danger's way to do so. Yet at the same time, he offers up his own daughters to these vile men to try to get them to leave the guests alone. Living in a city with such warped morals has apparently warped his morals as well. As one commentator put it, "For a moment it is Sodom that has taken up residence in Lot's soul."² Another way to put this is that Lot is not just in Sodom, Sodom is in Lot.

How can we avoid having our morals become corrupted like the world around us?

The Angels' Rescue (19:10-22)

Lot has found himself in an absolute mess. He is about to be attacked in a city that God is mere hours away from destroying. From a human standpoint, Lot is hopeless. But God loves Lot, and in the following section we see the undeserved favor of God for this righteous man who has allowed himself to be corrupted and grieved by a wicked city.

The Angels' Protection (10-11)

Physically these angels protect Lot by pulling him back inside the house and striking the men of the city with blindness. Even though Lot has put himself in a foolish and dangerous position, God supernaturally protected him from the outcome of his own foolish decisions. Now, God never owes it to us to keep us from the foolish outcome of our decisions. Sometimes, in His infinite wisdom, God decides that the best thing for us is to face those consequences. But God is good, and His goodness doesn't depend on our behavior. God here steps in and delivers Lot from those who are seeking to do him harm.

Lot's Hesitancy (14-16)

After demonstrating that they are supernatural emissaries, the angels now turn their attention to Lot and warn him that he must flee the city. They tell him to get everyone he can convince and leave with him because these angels will be bringing the judgment of God down upon the city. Lot goes immediately and seeks to bring his sons-in-law³ with him. Sadly, he seemed like he was joking around with them. They couldn't take seriously the warning from Lot that the city was about to be destroyed.

² Mathews, K. A. *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, Vol. 1B, The New American Commentary. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), page 237.

³ The Hebrew here probably indicates that these were his future sons-in-law. These would be the men who were betrothed to his two daughters.

Lot had been living in Sodom, likely even having some level of leadership.⁴ Yet Lot did not have a real impact on the city. Even the men who were to marry his daughters were not willing to take seriously the warning that judgment was coming on the city for its wickedness.

Why do you think Lot was unable to have real influence, even if he had some recognition?

Verse 16 gives us a sad picture into the life of Lot at this point. After hearing the severe warning from these angels, Lot lingers. With destruction coming quickly, and after being urged to get out of the city, Lot just can't seem to leave.

Why do you think Lot lingered?

Why do we sometimes linger when God has shown us what we must do, perhaps even to save ourselves or our families?

The Angels' Insistence (16-22)

Lot should not have been in Sodom to begin with. God was being very gracious to warn him to get out the city in the first place, but He went above and beyond that when he saved Lot by physically pulling him out. In the end these angels must physically take the hands of Lot, his wife, and his daughters and drag them from the city and tell them to get out. The reason why God chose to do this should give all of us hope in the face of God's judgment – "the Lord being merciful to him." Even in this awful judgment, God is willing to be merciful to Lot.

But Lot is not done dragging his feet. He then asks one of the angels if one of the nearby cities can be spared so that he can live there. Once again, God shows compassion for Lot over and above what he is due by granting him this request. The angels then make the interesting statement that they cannot do anything until Lot is out of the city. God's grace is, at least temporarily, holding back God's judgment until the righteous can be removed (cf 2 Peter 2:4-9).

What do we learn about God's character from watching His interaction with Lot?

How should this impact how we live today?

Sodom's Destruction (19:23-29)

Eventually, Lot and his family are far enough away that the destruction of Sodom, Gomorrah, and the surrounding cities begins. By the time God is done, only the small city of Zoar⁵ remains. Sadly, Lot's wife looks back in violation of the angels' order (19:17) and is destroyed along with the city. As we read this account, we are reminded that God takes sin seriously, and that sin will be judged. We are also reminded

⁴ The fact that Lot "sat in the gate" (19:1) could suggest a leadership role, as well as the statement that Lot was one who came to "sojourn" but was now "a judge" (19:9).

⁵ The Hebrew word for "small" used in Genesis 19:20 sounds like Zoar.

that, although God has shown grace and mercy over and over again to Lot and his family, His warnings must be obeyed. This passage should be a sobering reminder to all of us that the mercy of God does not negate the fury of God's righteous anger over sin. Yet even in this story of God's great wrath against sin, there is woven throughout it the compassion of God toward Lot and the faithfulness of God to Lot and to Abraham.

God's righteous fury against sin is not popular today. How might we need to be challenged and changed by the picture of God's justice we see in this chapter?

Lot's End (19:30-38)

This sad story is the last mention we have of Lot in the Bible. At one point he had so many flocks and herds that he couldn't stay with his uncle, now he lives alone in a cave with his daughters. Once he was a respected member of the community sitting in the gate, now he has no influence. Once he offered up his daughters to be sexually abused by other men, now his daughters take advantage of him so that they can conceive children. The shell of a man that is left would have looked nothing like the faith-filled nephew of Abraham who followed his uncle to the land that God had promised. His decisions have not cost him his salvation, as the New Testament tells us that he was a righteous man, but they have cost him his wealth, his influence, and his morality. While it may be true that Christians cannot lose their salvation, they can lose a whole lot if they compromise rather than live by faith.

Both Lot and Abraham had real faith. Both Abraham and Lot at times make decisions that fail to show faith. Yet Abraham and Lot end up in very different places. Why is Abraham remembered for his faith and Lot remembered for his compromise?