

Genesis 19

Choices & Consequences

In Genesis chapter 19 we have, what is to me, one of the saddest stories in the Bible. It is tragic for several reasons.

1. It shows humans at their worst. The ugliness of sin is exposed in this chapter.
2. It shows God's judgment. In Genesis 19 we're shown the horror of God's offended holiness paying out sin's due.
3. It shows just how far a God-follower can go in worldliness and sin with catastrophic results.

This chapter should stand as a wake up call to everyone, God-follower or not.

Open your Bible to Genesis 19 page 16

As we've been studying Genesis we've seen how God choose out a man named Abraham to be the father of the Jewish people.

A few weeks ago we saw, back in chapter 13, Abraham and his nephew Lot parted company because of the conflict between their herdsmen.

Abraham said to his nephew "Let's not fight. Take whatever land you want."

So Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom. Genesis 13:10-12

Lot's move toward Sodom was done in complete awareness of what he was getting himself into. Basically he saw, he chose, and he acted.

Sodom was known far and wide for its wickedness and Lot was drawn by the bright lights and sensual attractions to move into the city itself.

In Chapter 18 God himself announces to Abraham that *...the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and ... their sin is very grave. Genesis 18:20*

Then Abraham intercedes for the city and God promises not to destroy it if there can be found 10 righteous people there. But in the end even 10 couldn't be found.

Jude 7 gives us this description of Sodom: *Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*

That's the picture we usually have of Sodom. But now listen to this: *Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.* Ezekiel 16:49

The immorality was blatant but so was the materialism, laziness, and lack of concern for the poor. Sodom sounds a lot like cities in our world today. It even sounds like a bit like our country.

Today were going to look at the results of a believer in God choosing to go their way rather than God's way. Are there consequences to the choices we make? There was for Lot and there will be for us too.

Looked what happened.

I. Lot Lost All Sense Of Moral Value

In Chapter 19 and verse 1 we read...

These two angels, who were in the form of men, had first visited Abraham and now had come to Lot.

Notice Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. The gate was the place where the judicial and business activities took place. It could be that Lot was merely there to do business or it could even be that he was serving as some sort of magistrate at this point.

Whatever, Lot presents a sad picture. Here was a guy who had participated in one of the highest callings ever given by God to human beings. He'd been right there to experience tremendous revelations and deliverances from God. And yet now he was right at home in the midst of the life of one of the most wicked cities that ever disgraced the planet.

Now you might wonder was Lot really a God-follower? Was he a saved man, or was he an unbeliever? He sure acted like an unbeliever. Just so that there's no question in our minds look at **II Peter 2 Page 1080**

Read verses 4-9

Lot was righteous by faith, not by his actions. The unrighteousness around him tormented his soul - it bothered him.

But isn't it interesting that Lot stayed anyway? What a picture of a believer living in the world, living in the middle of the ungodly things of the culture, and yet knowing down deep inside that what he's doing is wrong. We're not told that Lot practices the horrible sins of Sodom, and I'm sure he didn't. But in general he figured it was worth the temporal benefits, it was worth the stuff he could accumulate. He enjoyed the acceptance and the camaraderie of the people of Sodom.

But there was a price to pay, for just kind of blending into society.

Back to Genesis 19 Read verses 2-5

The two angels said, "We'll sleep in the street." Lot knew that you didn't do that in Sodom so he pressured them to stay in his house.

In verse 4 the Bible clearly gets across to us how widespread the corruption of the city was. Notice the people came from every quarter - old and young. They shouted their desires publicly and they asked Lot to send out his two visitors so that they might know them.

Now they didn't want to just meet them and shake their hands, but the word "know" in the Old Testament is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

The city of Sodom was filled with wickedness and violence and even today we use the term "sodomy" to describe abnormal sexual behavior.

No wonder God had told Abraham that *the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave.*

Sodom stands out in the Bible as the example of an overthrow without remedy. When God sent the Jewish prophet Jonah to preach in the Assyrian capital of Nineveh, the judgment he proclaimed was cancelled when the people there repented.

When it comes to the flood, that judgment will never be repeated. God has pledged himself by a rainbow in the sky. But the sins of Sodom don't have a remedy.

Today we're kind of caught in the middle of a seismic moral shift in our country. There are people all around us who are caught up in sexual sin who need the message of God's grace and forgiveness. The best thing we can do is to be real, honest friends who model the love of Christ.

That's true whether they're practicing the homosexual lifestyle or whether they're straight and caught up in adultery or pornography.

People all around us are grasping for the breath of life and we have the person of Christ to introduce them to.

But the other side is the warnings of Romans 1 in the New Testament. There it says one of the signs that a nation has drifted far from their Creator is that God gives them over to the practice and consequences of their sin.

Sodom and the other four cities of the plain were cities that had gone beyond the point of no return.

And here was Lot surrounded by filthy minded men, who up until now accepted him because he fit right in to their culture. He didn't rock the boat. He wasn't a voice for righteousness. He just kept quiet and went along with the flow of things so that he could prosper materially.

By living this way Lot eventually lost all sense of moral values.

Read verses 6-8

Sin is a downward slide. When we start compromising in one area of our life we start deteriorating in others. Eventually we lose sensitivity to sin, particularly in the area of morals. Moral deterioration is the worst kind of deterioration. Lot was like an airplane pilot in a fog without instruments.

Years ago I started on a pilot's license and one of the things we learned was that unless your rated for instruments if you get caught in thick fog you actually lose all

sense of which way is up and which way is down. In fact we listened to an actual recording of a pilot who was in communication with a tower but was totally disoriented in the fog.

You listened as that pilot literally rammed that plane into the ground and killed himself not even knowing he was headed down.

Lot was like that. He had lost all sense of direction.

Get the picture. Here's a believer in Jehovah God, a friend of Abraham the friend of God, a man who had been a pilgrim, a man who had once lived in a tent and who had once confessed Abraham's faith, calling the people of Sodom who want to brutalize his house guests "brethren" and then actually offering them his daughters.

That's how far the unholy morality of Sodom had warped Lot's sense of values.

And now listen to this... **Read verse 9**

NKJV, NIV, NASB all translate that first phase as "stand back" or "get out of the way." H. C. Leopold who was a very capable German Hebrew scholar says it doesn't mean "get back" but "come here."

In other words they said, "Come here buddy!"
Notice the sneering contempt in their voices.

"This fellow came in to stop over a while and he wants to be our judge. He came to live with us and we've tolerated him because his uncle Abraham rescued us from our enemies for his sake. But when he wants to start telling us what to do that is it."

"Come here and we'll deal worse with you than them."

Read verses 10-11

If you wonder why God's angels would ever let Lot get into such a situation in the first place remember God never forces people to obey. Every choice that we make is ultimately our own. And when we are walking our own way we can get in some awful situations.

I. Lot Lost All Sense Of Moral Value

II. Lot Lost His Influence Over Those Closest To Him

Read verses 12-14

If Lot hadn't known before (and I kind of think he did by the way he tried to protect them), he certainly realized now that these men were really angels, sent by God to judge and destroy the cities of the plain. In an attitude of total urgency, the angels offered to spare Lot and his family, even including the men of Sodom who had married his other daughters.

At the same time the angels told him in no uncertain terms that his family would have to leave the city altogether, because it was about to be destroyed.

By this time, the mob had dispersed from around the house and Lot realized he was being divinely protected.

But listen. When he went out to warn the rest of his family his sons-in-law basically said "You crazy old man. God's going to judge us and destroy this city? Sure he is." And they mocked Lot. They ridiculed him. They completely refused to take his warning seriously.

You know, I have watched parents act exactly like Lot and I've seen their children act in exactly the same way.

Parents compromise with one foot in the world and the other in the kingdom of God and in the end their kids reject their faith as hypocritical. I hope you take this for what it is intended to be. A deeply sobering warning of the deadly results that parents compromise with the world can have on their own children.

What a sleepless night that must have been for Lot as he thought about his family and how he had lost any influence on them. How they were destined to face God's judgment because of his own unrighteousness and greed.

I. Lot Lost All Sense Of Moral Value

II. Lot Lost His Influence Over Those Closest To Him

III. Lot Lost His Will To Do What Was Right

Read verses 15 & 16

There are three words that just jump out of verse 16 *while he lingerer*.

Isn't that amazing? The angels said, "We will destroy this place. That's why God sent us here. Get out before your consumed. And Lot lingerer.

Lot still held on. It was like he was still clinging to the fleeting hope that he wouldn't really have to give up all the physical comforts of his home in Sodom.

How could Lot have any affection for a place when the inhabitants were so depraved as to come to his door at night seeking to vent their depravity on his guests? Why would Lot linger in a city where he had almost forced to sacrificed the honor of his two daughters?

This is an amazingly accurate picture of how we can loose the will to do what's right. Everyone of us in some way are like Lot.

God warns against sin, pronounces judgment on the ungodly and there we are so often lingering. We're like, let me just hold on to some little piece of the action.

But notice God's grace. The men grabbed the hands of Lot, his wife and his two daughters and led them out.

At this point remember why God was showing compassion on Lot. It's only because of Abraham, the man Lot had treated so disgracefully.

It was Abraham who pleaded with God to preserve Lot and his family from total destruction.

I. Lot Lost All Sense Of Moral Value

II. Lot Lost His Influence Over Those Closest To Him

III. Lot Lost His Will To Do What Was Right

IV. Lot Took Advantage Of God's Grace

Read verses 17-19

Now catch the total picture of what is happening here. Listen to the urgency in the angel's words, "Escape for your life. Get out of here so you're not vaporized. Don't even look back."

The spiritual lesson is obvious. When we're talking about what God calls evil we're supposed to flee, not looking back with regrets or longing.

But Lot turns to these two men and says "Please, no my Lord!"

That's a contradiction in terms. You don't say "No, master." You obey if he's your Lord.

He says, "Indeed now your servant..." Funny how he's suddenly become the servant here.

He says, "Your servant can't go way off to the mountain. I can't go that far away" is what he's saying.

And look at what he asks. **Read verse 20**

"There's this little city that's near here. Let me go hang out there instead of having to live in the mountains. What can it hurt - it's such a little place. Spare that city and let me stay there."

Verse 22 identifies the city as Zoar. Zoar or Safi was one of the five cities of the plain along with Admah, Zeboiim, Sodom and Gomorra.

In other words, Lot was begging God not to send him out of the area completely. He wanted to still be somewhat comfortable in his world.

Talk about taking advantage of God's grace. God is saying, "Leave this place. It's sinful. It's corrupt. It's debauched. I'm going to wipe it off the face of the map. By my mercy and grace I'm sparing your life" and Lot is saying please Lord just let me hang on to a little bit of my security in this world."

You know the only one that presumes on God's grace like that is the person who doesn't really understand God's character.

Lot didn't understand God's holiness. He didn't understand why God was calling him out of the corruption. All he could see was those bright city lights and material comforts.

To him God was kind of like a cosmic kill joy, trying to spoil his comfortable life. He couldn't see the forest for the trees. When we presume upon God's grace it's because of ignorance.

When we say to God, "Lord I want my little pet sins and vices, don't cleanse me, don't purify me, don't separate me from them we're completely oblivious to two things:

1. The sufferings of Jesus on the cross for those sins.
2. The fact that God is calling us way from them for our own good.

Lot couldn't see that.

In remarkable grace and long suffering through his angelic agents God granted Lot this presumptuous request.

I. Lot Lost All Sense Of Moral Value

II. Lot Lost His Influence Over Those Closest To Him

III. Lot Lost His Will To Do What Was Right

IV. Lot Took Advantage Of God's Grace

V. Lot Lost His Life Partner

Read verses 21 - 23

He spared Zoar for Lot's sake. But all of this delay had wasted valuable time, and they need to get moving. Notice the angel said "I can't do a thing until you come out of there."

We don't know for sure but I have to wonder if Lot's wife had been partially responsible for Lot's delaying tactics. She didn't want to leave in the first place, and would rather have moved to Zoar than to an unknown life in the mountains.

As they rushed to Zoar, it seems likely that she lagged behind, still resentful of having to leave her home and friends in Sodom.

But of all the things that Lot lost probably the loss of his wife was the most grievous to him.

Read verses 24 - 27

Lot and his family are finally out of the danger zone and instantly judgment falls. Fire and brimstone came hurtling down from the sky. Hell rained from heaven. And the cities were destroyed. And lot's wife looked back.

The angels had said, "Don't look back" But Lot's wife looked back. And she did it from behind him.

The words "looked back" have the connotation of "looking intently." Henry Morris in his commentary on Genesis suggests it might be translated "lagged behind" or even "returned back." In any case, she wasn't with her husband and daughters and she perished.

One possibility is that the explosions in the region threw great quantities of salty debris. This was a salty region, now covered by a shallow portion of the Dead Sea, and it was filled with flammable tar pits.

As this salt came raining down upon her she would have been buried and covered with the substance like the people in Pompeii when it was buried by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius.

Whatever the exact process might have been, It's interesting Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife."

Whether Lot's wife was a true believer or not apparently wasn't important for us to know because the Bible doesn't say.

And although it is possible he met her in Sodom, it seems more likely that she had been with him while he was still with Abraham 20 years before. They had several children and at least 2 of them were married.

In any case, she was filled with the attitudes of Sodom and was so unhappy about leaving that she straggled behind only to be trapped and to die in the catastrophe that overwhelmed the city.

- I. Lot Lost All Sense Of Moral Value*
- II. Lot Lost His Influence Over Those Closest To Him*
- III. Lot Lost His Will To Do What Was Right*
- IV. Lot Took Advantage Of God's Grace*
- V. Lot Lost His Life Partner*

VI. Lot's Family Was Infected With A Non-Biblical Worldview

Read verses 30 - 38

Wow. That's quite an ending to a sad saga.

Leupold, in his commentary on Genesis, gives homiletical suggestions, or suggestions for preaching, at the end of each chapter.

At the end of Genesis 19 he writes. "Not every part of this chapter is suited for homiletical use. It seems to us that verses 1 - 11 contain several elements that would require explanation and yet cannot be explained without a measure of impropriety and if there be a difference of opinion on this point, certainly all must agree that verse 30 - 38 cannot be a text for a sermon."

I have to disagree. It's not a pleasant chapter. It's certainly not uplifting. But I believe it's a chapter that everyone of us needs to read and reread. It is not written to excite us or to draw us into mental participating in these sins.

The Bible never does that. God is always very careful to tell us these things in a way that keeps us at a distance. And yet they really happened. And there are lessons for all of us to learn in them.

Lot is an Old Testament example of a believer who tried to live like he didn't really belong to God.

Now the story of Lot is obviously an extreme case. Most of us can't identify directly with the depth to which he fell. But I believe we can all identify with the process. Every day of our lives the world around us holds out its attractions to us.

There are so many things to see, to look at, to think about; things that dull our sensitivity to God and His word. We don't even have to go out looking. They come to us. How easy it is to see, and then choose, and then act on that choice. For you, it might be an overwhelming desire for material things, for stuff, that dulls your sensitivity to God. For someone else it may be temptation to immorality, through what you see and think about. For others it may be something else.

You know your own heart and you know what it is that can capture you. There's only one solution. We need to see this world as God sees it, with its deception and

enticement. And then we have to look the other way, make up our minds that we won't sin against God.

Abraham took these steps. Lot didn't. Abraham was blessed. Lot reaped what he sowed in a harvest of