

Where Wickedness Rules
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Genesis 18:20-25; 19:12-16

Billy Graham quoted his wife Ruth as saying:

*"If God doesn't punish America, He'll have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah."*¹ **What do you think she meant by that statement? To quote Francis Schaeffer, "How then shall we (believers) live?"**

Chuck Swindoll hits the nail on the head:

"If we aren't actively paddling against the current of our culture, we're passively being swept away by it."

Our lesson text begins in 18:20. But we need some background. Abraham and Lot went their separate ways. Abraham graciously allowed Lot to choose where he would take his family to settle, and Lot chose Sodom. Bad idea! At the beginning of chapter eighteen God comes calling on Abraham personally. The Lord Jesus in human form along with two angelic beings.²

Genesis 18:1–2 (HCSB)

Abraham's Three Visitors

18 Then the Lord appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre while he was sitting in the entrance of his tent during the heat of the day.² He looked up, and he saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them and bowed to the ground.

In the next few verses Abraham swings into action showing incredible hospitality to the three visitors. This account isn't just a lesson in showing hospitality to strangers; it displays Abraham's sensitivity to the presence of God.

Genesis 18:10 (HCSB)

¹⁰ The Lord said, "I will certainly come back to you in about a year's time, and your wife Sarah will have a son!" Now Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent behind him.

Sarah laughs at the ridiculous idea of bearing a child in old age and God asks both of them the question He asks us all: "...is anything too hard for the Lord?"

That brings us to today's lesson. Here's the BIG IDEA: God is patient and long-suffering with sinful people. However, when sin reaches a certain point, His immense patience becomes intense judgment. Still, He will show grace to those who turn to Him in faith and repentance.

Genesis 18:16–17 (HCSB)

Abraham's Plea for Sodom

¹⁶ The men got up from there and looked out over Sodom, and Abraham was walking with them to see them off. ¹⁷ Then the Lord said, "Should I hide what I am about to do from Abraham?"

Genesis 18:20–25 (HCSB)

²⁰ Then the Lord said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is immense, and their sin is extremely serious. ²¹ I will go down to see if what they have done justifies the cry that has come up to Me. If not, I will find out."

- Just how immense and serious were the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah? Just read 19:4-9 and you get a sense of it. **Today, thousands of years later, what do the names Sodom and Gomorrah represent?**
- Verse twenty-one is a little puzzling. God is OMNISCIENT...He knows everything. **Why would He personally "go down and see" how sinful Sodom and Gomorrah were? What does this teach us about Him?**

²² The men turned from there and went toward Sodom while Abraham remained standing before the Lord. ²³ Abraham stepped forward and said, "Will You really sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ What if there are 50 righteous people in the city? Will You really sweep it away instead of sparing the place for the sake of the 50 righteous people who are in it? ²⁵ You could not possibly do such a thing: to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. You could not possibly do that! Won't the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

- If we were in Abraham's situation we might have said, "*Lord, you're right, Sodom is beyond repair and you SHOULD burn it up in a fireball! Would you just let me go over and pull out just one family?*" **What DID Abraham do instead?**
- Abraham pleads with God for "deliverance for Sodom if there were as few as 50.... 45.... 40.... 30.... 20, or even 10 righteous people there (18:24–32)."³ **Was it wrong for Abraham to "bargain" with God? Why?**
- Verse twenty-five: **What is it about God's character that made Abraham so bold in pleading with God? How might that shape our prayers for our city, state, country, or world today?**
- Scripture tells us: "God is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9), and He "will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:4). [God is quoted:] "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek. 33:11).

Warren Wiersbe writes:

*The issue is not what kind of sins people commit, though some sins are certainly worse than others, but that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) and beyond that death is an eternal hell. Intercessors must have compassionate hearts and a deep concern for the salvation of the lost, no matter what their sins may be.*⁴

- When you and I witness the terrible sinfulness of our society, do we “cluck our tongues” in disgust, or plead with God to have mercy on our world?
- Abraham didn’t just shake his head; he pleaded with God.
- The angels of the Lord went to investigate the situation in Sodom. They received very different treatment there than they had from Abraham.
- The first eleven verses recount how Lot gives them shelter, but the perverted men of the town beat on the door demanding that Lot send the angels out so the mob could abuse them with lewd and immoral acts.
- Lot’s solution blows our minds. He proposes to send out his two virgin daughters so the men could abuse them instead!
- The angels solve the problem by making the mob blind and they literally drag Lot and his family out of the city.

Genesis 19:12–16 (HCSB)

¹² Then the angels said to Lot, “Do you have anyone else here: a son-in-law, your sons and daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of this place, ¹³ for we are about to destroy this place because the outcry against its people is so great before the Lord, that the Lord has sent us to destroy it.”

¹⁴ So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were going to marry his daughters. “Get up,” he said. “Get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city!” But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.

¹⁵ At daybreak the angels urged Lot on: “Get up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city.”

¹⁶ But he hesitated. Because of the Lord’s compassion for him, the men grabbed his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters. Then they brought him out and left him outside the city.

- The angels warned Lot they were about to destroy Sodom because of its sin (God couldn’t find even 10 righteous people!)
- **What was Lot’s reaction? How did his family respond? Why didn’t Lot’s family listen to him? What does that say about Lot and his family? Was Lot a righteous man?**

2 Peter 2:7–8 (HCSB)

⁷ and if He rescued righteous Lot, distressed by the unrestrained behavior of the immoral ⁸ (for as he lived among them, that righteous man tormented himself day by day with the lawless deeds he saw and heard)—

- **If Lot was a righteous man, why did he hesitate to leave?**
- Lot is a picture of a good man who compromised because of his environment. He knew the difference between good and evil. He was a “judge” who sat at the city gates. He had witnessed his uncle Abraham’s personal, obedient relationship with God.
- Yet, Lot was obviously lured to the “high life” of Sodom.

- We can speculate that he had convinced himself he was being light in a dark place. But the reaction of his sons-in-law, and his own hesitation tell us he had no real witness even to his own family.
- Instead of fleeing the city with the angels, Lot spent a sleepless night wringing his hands about having to leave “sin city.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says it well:

*“...it was difficult to get Lot out of Sodom, and Sodom out of Lot’s family.”⁵
 “[Lot] at first pitched his tent near Sodom, but later Sodom controlled his life. ... He escaped judgment by the grace of God, but his heart was in Sodom...As long as the Lord left Lot alone, he would seek to profess faith while at the same time living in Sodom. Ultimately he could not have both. Sodom would have destroyed him if the Lord had not destroyed Sodom.”⁶*

- Before we’re too hard on Lot, let’s look in the mirror. Our secular culture provides a lot excitement and entertainment and not all of it is bad.
- The problem comes when we cross the line into compromising what God tells us in His word in order to “fit in” with the pagan culture around us.
- Look at verse sixteen for the good news. Even though “Lot hesitated,” it tells us “because of the “Lord’s compassion” Lot and his family were spared from the destruction of Sodom.
- Lot’s wife wasn’t spared for long though (verse 26;) and Lot and his daughters didn’t exactly live a sanctified life after escaping. You can read that sad story in verses 30-38 for yourself.
- Look at the contrast between Abraham and Lot. Lot was clearly righteous but badly compromised. On the other hand Abraham’s relationship with God meant God heard his plea and spared Lot’s family. Look at verse 29:

Genesis 19:29 (HCSB)

²⁹ So it was, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, He remembered Abraham and brought Lot out of the middle of the upheaval when He demolished the cities where Lot had lived.

- **How can you and I be more like Abraham and less like Lot?**

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Most would say this is a lesson about judgment, and it is! God is patient and long-suffering with sinful people. However, when sin reaches a certain point, His immense patience becomes intense judgment.
- More importantly though this is a lesson about God’s grace. In the midst of a sinful world, God will show grace and compassion to those who turn to Him in faith and repentance.
- This lesson also shows the contrast of two men. It’s not the story of a saint and a sinner. It’s the story of two sinners who were saved by God’s grace but responded to it very differently.

- Abraham certainly wasn't perfect. We know he had a problem telling the truth and suffered times of doubting God's protection and provision.
- Yet, Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness, and he was called God's friend." (James 2:23) Abraham had God's ear. This lesson proves James 5:16 – "The urgent request of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect." (HCSB)
- Then there is Lot...righteous but compromised. A man who clearly knew God but whose testimony was so diluted he couldn't even influence his own family. Instead of living close to God, Lot wanted to live as close as he could to edge without going over the cliff.
- The contrast of the lives of Abraham and Lot can be captured in the words of the Apostle John.

1 John 2:15 (ESV) ¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

1 John 2:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

- Abraham was God's friend. Lot seemed to barely know Him.
- The question for us this morning is whom do we most resemble: Abraham or Lot?

¹ <http://billygraham.org/story/billy-graham-my-heart-aches-for-america/>

Verses 17–22 make it clear that the Lord Jesus Christ was one of the three heavenly visitors; note also Abraham's words in v. 3. The great theme of this chapter is the believer's fellowship with Christ, for Abraham was "the friend of God" (James 2:23). In chapter 19 we will see Lot, the friend of the world. Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Ge 18). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.²

³ Ross, A. P. (1985). Genesis. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 60). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ Wiersbe, W. W. (1991). *Be Obedient* (p. 78). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁵ Ross, A. P. (1985). Genesis. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 60). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁶ Ross, A. P. (1985). Genesis. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 60). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.