Faith Mission Home Dr. Rick Griffith

9 June 1991 Single Message

Cyclical Inductive 45 Minutes

**Destruction of Two Cities**

Genesis 19:1-29

**Topic:** Judgment

**Subject:** Give yourself fully to the Lord rather than to the world

**Complement:** because otherwise at judgment you’ll lose all rewards.

**Purpose:** The listeners will get right with God in light of future judgment.

**Introduction**

1. RAPTURE inevitable though not foreseeable or believed.

2. The needle wasn’t defective—the man was. He received accurate information of the coming catastrophe and yet continued in unbelief. For him it was life as usual.

3. Unfortunately many Christians are carnal and try to live in two worlds: one of godly values which see judgment coming and the other of ungodly values that ignore the warnings. I think of all the Old Testament characters the one who illustrates this hypocrisy most is Lot.

4. You’ll remember from your earlier studies in the Book of Genesis about Lot.

a. In Genesis 13 there was an argument between Abraham’s and Lot’s herdsmen because their herds were too big to keep together. In a very generous gesture, Abraham, Lot’s older uncle, gave Lot the first choice of the land. Lot had to select between two places: either a difficult life in the hills which avoided the wicked Canaanites, or an easy life on the plain which was near these evil Canaanites. He unwisely chose the latter, living near Sodom. Genesis 13:10-13 records his decision. [Read Gen. 13:10-13].

b. Although verse 12 says he only lived *near* Sodom, by 14:12 we see that he moved *into* the town. Notice here that he was taken prisoner by several kings *and*—notice this— “all his possessions.” In chapter 14 Abraham ends up rescuing Lot and his wealth.

c. In Genesis 18 we see Abraham pleading with God not to destroy Sodom if there’s even 10 righteous men living there. In essence Abraham was asking God to spare Lot’s life, if indeed Lot could be called righteous.

5. By chapter 19 Lot is an extremely wealthy man. In fact, he’s a judge and leader in the community since he’s sitting at the city gate. My assignment for today in Genesis 19 is rather unique. It’s not every week that I get invited to speak on hell, fire, and brimstone!

a. One scholar says of Genesis 19, “There is hardly a more horrible account anywhere on the pages of [the Bible]. Both the degeneracy … as well as the catastrophic overthrow of the cities involved are calculated to startle by their lurid and gruesome details. Luther confessed that he could not read the chapter without a feeling of deep revulsion.”[[1]](#endnote-1)

b. In fact, this same author goes on to say that verses 1-11 are not “suited for homiletical use” and verses 30-38 “cannot be a text for a sermon. That leaves verses 12-[29].”[[2]](#endnote-2)

c. Well, there you have it! One of the most reputable scholars of the 20th century says I shouldn’t preach most of chapter 19 today! Let’s go home!

d. No, this passage is as much the Word of God as any other, so I believe the Lord has something to say to us from it.

6. This passage breaks down nicely into three short time periods.

a. Verses 1-14 take place in the evening. See verse 1?

b. Verses 15-22 take place in the early morning. Notice how verse 15 refers to the dawn.

c. And then verses 23-29 take place after sunrise.

7. I’m convinced that as we look at these three sections this morning that God will speak to us about our own temptation to be hypocritical by trying to follow the world. So what do we need to know about the world to not “sit on the fence”? How can we really live for God and avoid a carnal lifestyle? Well, in Genesis 19 we first find out that…

**I. God warns us that He will judge our world because of its wickedness (1-14).**

 **The Lord in effect says to us, “Your entire planet stands under My judgment.”**

 How does He do it in this passage?

A. God warns Lot that Sodom will be destroyed because of its sin (1-14).

1. Lot warmly receives God’s angels sent to him (1-3).

a. Lot treats these visitors just like Abraham did in the previous chapter—with utmost respect and hospitality.

1) He greets them by bowing down to them in the traditional near-East manner.

2) He addresses them as “my lords.” It’s unlikely that he saw them as God since he uses the plural, but he does honor them by calling them “sirs.” Due to its evil reputation Sodom probably didn’t entertain outside guests very often!

3) Lot refers to himself humbly as their servant.

4) He offers them his own home and tells them that they can leave early in the morning. (He’s unaware of their mission to destroy the town.)

b. The angels, however, graciously refuse his request: “Oh, thanks, but we don’t want to trouble you. Everyone always sleeps out in the open in this culture. We’ll just stay in the square.”

c. Lot’s good side again comes forth, “Oh, no, don’t do that,” he says—although he is too embarrassed to tell them why—that he has chosen to live in an immoral town.

d. The men finally agree and have a good meal at his house.

(Everything sure sounds great at this point. The men have successfully made it to the city and even found hospitality in the home of one of the city rulers! But the tide turns in verses 4-11 where we learn that…)

2. Sodom deserves judgment (4-11).

a. Notice how many of the men of the city surrounded the house for their vile pursuits (4-5).

1) Did I read that right? What exactly did the men want to do with the angels?

2) The NIV and GNB say “have sex” and capture the idea well.

3) Other translations translate this: “have relations” (NASB), “rape” (LB), and the KJV is the most literal: “that we may know them” (KJV).

4) The Hebrew word means “to know” and is used of Adam sleeping with Eve in Genesis 4:1. Maybe that’s the clearest translation yet!

(So what would you do in such a situation? You can’t simply throw your guests out for your neighbors to abuse. Lot is *not* void of courage since he goes out to meet the mob, but *is* void of wisdom in that comes up with the solution he proposes in verses 6-8…)

b. Lot counteroffers with his virgin daughters instead (6-8)!

1) The translation in verse 8, “You can do whatever you like with them” is quite ironic in the original. It reads, “Do to them according to the good in your eyes.”

2) This is like handing a Stratovarius violin to a gorilla and saying, “Now I know you’re gentle and will take good care of my violin”!

3) Ironically, in a crazy twist of events at the end of the chapter, Lot ends up carrying out his own horrible proposal by lying with his daughters himself!

c. Then the men of Sodom respond like gorillas in verse 9. They much prefer a homosexual to a heterosexual experience.

d. And finally the one who seeks to protect his guests ends up getting protected *by* his guests (10-11)! Apparently the mob disperses in a blind stupor.

(Finally the angels announce their twofold purpose in coming to the city: to destroy Sodom and to rescue Lot. In verses 12-14…)

3. God mercifully warns Lot’s family of the coming judgment (12-14).

a. I find it interesting that Lot’s wife isn’t mentioned in verse 12, and maybe that’s why he doesn’t tell her of the impending judgment. He needed a reminder!

b. In fact, he doesn’t mention this to his only daughters as well. He goes to the future breadwinners of the family—the men engaged to his daughters.

c. However, they think he’s kidding. You see, they’re men of Sodom too.

(These verses stand as a testimony to the Jewish nation that God was justified in His command to purge the people from the land. But I believe what God says about Sodom ultimately applies to us as well…)

B. God warns us that our world will be destroyed because of its sin.

1. Just like He did to Sodom, God sends messengers to us to warn us that it’s short-lived. Who or what are these messengers?

a. Messages like this one remind us of the ultimate destruction upon unbelievers. The church used to have sermons about judgment preached all the time, but now they’re too few!

b. The Book of Revelation is also a message to us. It says that all whose names are not found in God’s Book of Life will be thrown into eternal torment.

c. Our conscience also warns us of coming judgment. There’s something innate in us that tells us right and wrong and that God will hold us accountable.

(The passage not only tells us that God sends messengers, but it also reminds us that…)

2. The world *we live in* deserves God’s judgment.

a. Are we really as bad as Sodom? No, worse! We read of worse atrocities than this every day in *the Straits Times.*

b. We are aghast at Lot offering up two of his own daughters as a sacrifice to protect his guests, yet *tens of millions* of daughters and sons are offered up as a regular practice not for hospitality but for convenience. You’ve probably guessed that I’m referring to the worldwide practice of abortion.

c. Maybe you’ve read about the horrible situation in China right now because of abortion. The one child per family law is still in effect now, and everyone still wants only sons so the girl fetuses are being aborted at an incredible rate. In fact, the result is that there are 9 boys for every girl now, meaning that by the late 1990s there will be over 125 *million* young men without hope of ever being married. Interestingly enough, Revelation 9:16 says that in the last days an army from the East of 200 million will kill one third of mankind. My point, though, is that our world is as messed up as Sodom. I fear that God’s patience is running thin.

(So our world deserves judgment, and just as was the case of Lot…)

3. God mercifully warns us of the coming judgment .

a. Notice that only Lot was warned. God didn’t send His angels to the city at large.

b. I think the application here is evident. God warns the righteous so that they can warn others. How are you doing at warning others of the coming price for rejecting Him?

(So in verses 1-14 we see that God warns of Sodom’s destruction—and He reminds us that our world also won’t escape his hand too. I think we’re a lot like Lot. We too make a few futile attempts to convince people to repent but these attempts often fail. Why? Verses 15-22 provide an answer…)

**II. Worldly Christians** **say the world isn’t that bad & linger in its pleasures (15-22).**

 **If you’re a compromiser then you feel comfortable following the world.**

A. God tells Lot to flee but he hesitates to ponder Sodom’s so-called good points (15-22).

1. When Lot hesitated to flee, the angels had to rescue him forcibly (15-16)!

a. The word for “hesitate” here also means to “linger, tarry, wait.” Why didn’t he want to go? He didn’t want to see his possessions go up in smoke (literally!). Leaving Sodom meant leaving all he owned, leaving all the status he had worked for in the community, leaving his sons-in-law, etc.

b. Jesus said, “For where a man’s treasure is, there his heart is also.” Lot was tempted to sing, “I left my heart in Sodom Francisco”!

c. Notice that the story jumps to the next morning, recording nothing about what had happened in Lot’s mind during the night. I wonder what he was thinking…

(Whatever it was, he still didn’t think God’s way was best because…)

2. After being rescued Lot still bargained for his own way (17-22).

a. What’s this stuff about the little town? Well, Lot falsely thought that God wouldn’t judge the town of Bela because it was so small. In fact, the town was renamed “Zoar,” meaning “small,” because of this incident.

b. Amazingly God “knows that we are but dust” so He often even grants us these little concessions that mean so much to us but really don’t matter. It’s like what happens at our dinner table with Kurt, our four year old: “Dad, don’t put the sauce on top of the rice! Put it next to it!”

(I’m amazed at the parallels between Lot’s lifestyle and the way you and I live in the world…)

B. We Christians often love the world like Lot did and are unwilling to separate ourselves.

1. In fact, God sometimes has to *drag us away* from things that would destroy us!

a. I’m so thankful that God often answers our prayers “no”! (ILL: aircraft carrier)

b. Years before I married my wife Susan I was engaged with a Christian woman but she was a lot like Lot—unwilling to separate from the world. Her music, dress, and interests all were worldly. I remember fearing every time she bought a ring, because soon she “needed” earrings, a bracelet, and a necklace to match!

 God graciously dragged me away from that relationship that was dragging me into the world. He dragged me into a summer music group called the Continental Singers. After traveling around the US and Europe for three months serving the Lord, I finally came to my senses and saw what was happening and broke the relationship.

c. By the way, speaking of separation, let’s not be too hard on our fundamentalist brothers and sisters. We too often look down on them for what we consider to be a narrow attitude. I think we need to admire them for their hatred of sin.

d. Many times God has to do something drastic to knock some sense into us.

2. Even when God rescues us from the consequences of sin we still often bargain with God for our own will like Lot did.

a. God says, “Don’t look back! Go straight ahead” and we say, “Yeah, but how ‘bout this way?”

b. For example, God tells us, “I just got you out of debt. Don’t get into debt again,” and what do we do? Charge to the hilt. Others are in bondage, so why can’t we be in bondage too?

c. No wonder Scripture compares us to sheep! One sheep gets his head stuck in the fence and pretty soon another comes along. He says, “Hey, that looks fun!” then sticks his head in and gets stuck too! Pretty soon all the sheep line the fence with their heads stuck in a row. Then the Good Shepherd comes along and gently turns their heads and releases them, but soon they’ve repeated the same mistake.

d. I’ve seen this bargaining attitude numerous times in relation to believers contemplating divorce. As a pastor I told people in counseling sessions, “God says in Malachi that He hates divorce. It’s not His will for you.” Then the reply, “Yeah, but He’ll make an exception in my situation. After all, only He knows what I’ve gone through!”

(So far we’ve seen how God promised Lot that He would destroy Sodom and yet Lot hesitated to take Him seriously. I’ve pointed out how Lot is really a picture of that compromising attitude within all of us. We *intellectually* recognize the temporary nature of the world but somehow this knowledge doesn’t affect our *will.* I think this is because we often forget that God will hold us accountable for our deeds. The thing we forget is mentioned in verses 23-29…)

**III. When worldly saints are judged they’ll lose everything but their lives (23-29).**

 **When God destroys the world compromisers will forfeit all but salvation itself.**

A. God mercifully delivers Lot from judgment in answer to Abraham’s prayers (23-29).

1. Lot escaped Sodom’s fate because he finally set his heart against the city—but he lost everything else (23-25).

a. What did Lot lose? All his herds, his employees, his sons-in-law, his friends, his great number of possessions, his position in the community, the purity of his daughters (see the end of the chapter)—he lost everything but the clothes on his back which were probably scorched!

b. Truly Lot received his lot!

(The next verse records how he even lost his wife because…)

2. Lot’s wife received Sodom’s fate since her heart was really there (26).

a. What’s the significance of God judging her by turning her into salt?

b. Salt was used as a preservative in those days. God’s people are to be salt in society. By becoming salt Lot’s wife finally became *outside* Sodom what she should have been *inside* Sodom.

3. Lot escaped because God mercifully answered Abraham’s prayer of chapter 18 (27-29).

a. Verse 29 refers to Abraham’s request in chapter 18 that God not destroy Sodom if a righteous person was still there. The implication of this verse (and verse 21 too) is that God still considered Lot righteous.

b. One of the things that has always puzzled me about Lot is that 2 Peter 2:7-8 calls him as righteous man. Apparently Peter is using a relative standard of righteousness.

c. This chapter doesn’t depict God rescuing Lot because of his righteousness. The emphasis is on God’s mercy, although Lot lost a lot—his house, his lot, and a lot of other things as well.

(I believe that the message for us from this section is that…)

B. If we Christians invest everything in this temporary world then we’ll lose everything too—everything except our salvation.

1. The story of Lot barely escaping Sodom’s burning by fire should remind us of 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. Please turn there with me.

a. Here we see how each of us Christians constructs a building, so to speak, upon the foundation we have in Christ.

b. Each of us chooses his own materials or deeds which will be tested by fire—some which last and some which burn up.

c. [Read vv. 12-15].

d. Some of you are building like Lot did with wood, hay, and straw. How many times I’ve known or heard of people who never genuinely trusted Christ until their death bed or a major calamity. They end up saved but with no rewards or joy in this life.

e. I have a Christian friend named Bill in Texas. Bill had so much money that when our church was considering buying another church’s old property and building, he offered to pay for it all—an entire city block! When the cash got low at church, one time Bill slipped $100,000 dollars under the door.

 But Bill loved the world. Specifically, he loved money and what it could buy. That’s why he had a spacious home on the 18th hole of Fort Worth’s most prestigious golf course. He traded Mercedes for a living and made a killing in his lust for wealth.

 Then came the fateful “Black Monday” in October 1988. In the US Stock Market Bill lost $13 million dollars. Creditors flooded in and he barely escaped bankruptcy.

 But he got things together spiritually. After this experience this former millionaire worked as a carpenter at our church for $10 an hour. He told me, “I’m over $10 million in debt but I’m the happiest man I know.” He learned the secret of building on Christ’s foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones—materials that last!

2. I can’t help but think that some of us here don’t even have the *foundation* yet, so we’re like Lot’s wife. She pictures for us the person who looks not to *God* for salvation, but instead looks back on the *world*.

a. God wants to show you His mercy by saving you from the terrible results of sin. It’s called hell and it’s real. This reminds me of one car’s bumper sticker on an expressway. It read, “Heaven—don’t miss it for the world.”

b. God doesn’t leave us in the dark about the future of those who reject Christ. We’re not left like the blind men of Sodom groping for the door. Instead, we’re like Lot and his family being shown the reality in the light at the break of day.

c. The way to eternal life is simple—look *away* from the world which is passing away, and look *to* Jesus Christ in faith since He’s the only One who can give you protection.

d. You can come to know Him right now [pray with me].

**Conclusion**

1. So what have I been saying this morning? Simply this:

 Don’t become worldly like Lot since the world offers only temporary pleasures (M.I.).

Give yourself fully to the Lord because otherwise at judgment you’ll lose all rewards.

All that entices you to evil will pass away, so if you’re wise you’ll invest yourself in pursuits that last for eternity.

2. Maybe as we’ve studied the judgment of this wicked city this morning you’ve said, “Wow, I’m not perfect, but I’m sure not *that* bad!”

a. Don’t fool yourself into thinking that God grades on a curve!

b. If you sin but three times a day, that’s over 1000 times a year, and how many years old are you? You and I need God’s mercy as much as Lot did.

3. Could you bow with me as you ponder what God is saying to you? Today’s passage has an incredible amount of applications for us. Here’s just five brief principles:

a. Watch who you hang around with since they'll influence you more than you may think.

1) Lot’s choice to live with Sodomites greatly affected his ethics. Lot’s family got out of Sodom, but the end of the chapter shows that Sodom never got out of Lot’s family.

2) Are *your* closest friends godly influences? What do you need to do to make it so?

b. Realize that God won’t put you in a position where you *have* to sin.

1) Lot felt that he needed to choose between having either his guests or his daughters abused and didn’t explore other alternatives (but the angels did!).

2) God promises us in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that there is a *righteous* way to handle every temptation. That means that we never have to choose between the “better of two evils.” Are you seeking that way in your present situation?

c. Take the holiness and justice of God seriously. He *will* judge sin!

1) Lot felt that God wouldn’t destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, but he was wrong.

2) Is there a secret sin in your life? In your thoughts? In what you look at when no one is around? Remember Psalm 90:8, “You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.”

3) You see, secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven! Will you deal with your secret sin before God has to turn His searchlight upon it?

4) Are you worldly like Lot? John Wesley said that “anything that cools my love for Christ is the world.” What is cooling your love for God?

d. Remember that obedience is ultimately the easiest way.

1) Lot feared the mountains so he persisted on going to Zoar. In next week’s passage you’ll see that he soon left Zoar and ended up in the mountains anyway.

2) Sooner or later you and I are going to do what the Sovereign One says to do, so make it easy on yourself and obey now!

e. Don’t look back on the pleasures of the old life.

1) Lot’s family got out of Sodom, but Sodom didn’t get out of them. Mom became salt and the remainder of the chapter records how Dad and the girls became incestuous.

2) What sin was a pleasure to you in your old life before coming to Christ? Materialism? Sex? Personal power? Something else? Are you willing to stop looking back to that sin with longing and realize where following it will ultimately bring you?

4. Let’s take a couple of minutes for silent prayer. Ask God to show you how you’ve been trying to be like Lot—compromising, “fence sitting,” hypocritical, trying to live in two worlds [two minutes silence].

5. “Father, we confess that we’re all like Lot to one degree or another. We say we love you, but our actions show that we really love the world. Some of us may even be like Lot’s wife—we know what Christianity is about but we still look back and won’t embrace Christ as Savior. Meet each one of us in our need. Help us be sensible and live for You. In Jesus name, Amen.”

**Preliminary Questions**

**Verses Questions**

General What did the author record just prior to this passage?

General Why is this passage in the Bible?

1 Why did the angels go to Sodom? (answered in v. 13)

1 Why was Lot sitting in the gateway? Was he expecting them there or ruling as an elder?

2 Does Lot say to them “my lords” because he saw them as superior? even as angels?

2 What does Lot’s bowing down communicate?

2 Did Lot expect them to leave without destroying Sodom?

2 Why did the angels prefer to sleep in the square?

3 Why didn’t Lot want them to sleep in the square?

4 Why did they surround the house? bbæs; (BDB 686a 1a) means “to turn oneself against, close around upon” (cf. Josh. 7:9)

4-5 What exactly did the men want to do with the angels? Note that “have sex” (NIV, GNB), “have relations” (NASB), “rape” (LB), “that we may know them” (KJV), [d;yæ means “to know” and is used of Adam sleeping with Eve in Gen. 4:1.

4-5 Was this homosexual advance a regular practice towards strangers?

8 Did Lot really consider his obligation to protect his guests over the lives of his daughter’s?

 “Do to them as [is] good in your eyes” (Heb.)

9 How was Lot an alien?

13 Whose outcry is referred to?

14 Were these men already married to Lot’s daughters? (no, virgins in v. 8)

14 What does the attitude of the sons-in-law reveal about them? about Lot?

15 What were the sons-in-law doing all night long? and the homosexual men?

16 Why did Lot hesitate to leave the city? because of his son-in-law? possessions? disbelief?

16 Did the angels seize the Lot family (the whole lot) against their will?

17 Why not look back? Why not stop on the plain? Why go to the mountains?

18-19 How would Lot be swept away while still in the mountains?

20 What’s the significance of the city being small?

22 What does Zoar mean?

23 What’s the significance of the sun’s position? Sunrise is “an image of divine salvation and divine judgment upon the wicked” (John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” *EBC*, 2:157).

26 Why did Lot’s wife look back?

26 Why did God judge her by turning her into salt?

10 Lot acted to protect the angels, but in actuality it was the angels who protected Lot!

**Tentative S/C Statements and Outlines**

Subject: Why not live an uncompromising life? What’s wrong with “sitting on the fence”?

Don’t live a compromising life because the world offers only temporary pleasure (M.I.).

Give yourself fully to the Lord because otherwise at judgment you’ll lose all rewards (M.I.)

God warns us that He will destroy the world because of its wickedness (1-14).

Hypocrites say the world isn’t all that bad and linger in its pleasures (15-22).

When worldly saints are judged they lose everything except their lives (23-29).

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is recorded to justify God’s command to destroy the Canaanites and as an example for Israel not to imitate the lifestyles of the Sodomites or Lot (E.I.).

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah warns believers to repent from sin.

I. God warns us that He will judge our world because of its awful sin (1-14).

 How does He do it in this passage?

 God warns Lot that Sodom will be destroyed because of its sin (1-14).

II. The world is enticing to the carnal believer but repulsive to God (15-22)

III. God will preserve the righteous from destruction upon the world (23-29).

 How does He do it in this passage?

 God shows His mercy by delivering Lot from judgment.

The character of hypocrites repulses God

I. Hypocrites think they can live in two worlds (1-11).

 Lot sought to please both God and men.

A. He sought to please God through hospitality to his guests.

B. He sought to please men by offering his daughters to the wicked townspeople.

II. Hypocrites’ values are laughed at by their younger relatives (12-14).

 Lot wasn’t respected even by his own family.

III. Hypocrites risk to protect his lifestyle (15-16).

 Lot’s love for the world made him hesitate even to save his own life.

IV. Hypocrites are always trying to make a deal with God (17-22).

 Lot insisted that his solution was better than God’s.

God’s holiness destroys unrighteousness

God’s mercy is balanced with His justice.

Evidences of His mercy:

1 He sent angels to give Lot warning

14 Lot was given time to warn others as well

16 The angels rescued Lot, his daughters, and his wife

Man’s unrighteousness will be judged by God

Evidences of Lot’s sinfulness:

1 He held a prominent place among wicked people (e.g., Sodom Francisco; Ps. 1:1)

2 He sought to avoid judgment by ushering the angels out before they could see the wickedness of the city

8 He offered his virgin and engaged daughters over to sexually perverse men (“like handing a Stratovarius violin over to a gorilla”)

14 His sons-in-law laughed at a life or death issue

14 He showed more concern for his future sons-in-law than for his wife and daughters

16 He hesitated at his own life preservation and had to be forcefully dragged out of Sodom

18-20 Even in safety he distrusted the angels by requesting a different place of protection

26 His influence on his wife was negligible as she was also disobedient

30-38 His influence on his daughters was negligible as they were also disobedient

B. The world rejects God’s messengers of righteousness (4-11).

**Endnotes**

1. Leupold, *Genesis*, 1:554. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid, 578. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)