

Genesis 19B (2011)

A family had twin boys whose only resemblance to each other was their looks. If one felt it was too hot, the other thought it was too cold. If one said the TV was too loud, the other claimed the volume needed to be turned up. Opposite in every way, one was an eternal optimist, the other a doom and gloom pessimist.

Just to teach them a lesson, for Christmas their father loaded the pessimist son's room with every imaginable toy and game, while the optimist son's room he loaded with a pile of horse manure.

That night the father passed by the pessimist's room and found him sitting amid his new gifts crying bitterly.

"Why are you crying?" the father asked.

"Because my friends will be jealous, I'll have to read all these instructions before I can do anything with this stuff, I'll constantly need batteries, and my toys will eventually get broken." answered the pessimist twin.

Passing the optimist twin's room, the father found him dancing for joy in the pile of manure. "What are you so happy about?" he asked.

To which his optimist twin replied, "There's got to be a pony in here somewhere!"

- Before rejoining Lot as he stands between the hostile crowds and the visiting angels in his house, we need to find our "pony" in this story
- Let's begin by remembering Abraham's prayer for his nephew
 - Abraham asked the Lord to spare the city if ten righteous were found
 - The Lord agreed, but we're left wondering what will happen to Lot and his family
 - At first it seems likely that there would be at least ten in the entire city who knew the Lord
 - Lot and his family are at least four, perhaps as many as six if his daughters have taken husbands
 - But will there be ten?

- And if ten aren't found, will God hold Abraham to the original bargain thereby destroying Lot with the city?
 - If so, what kind of lesson will God be teaching Abraham about God's character?
- Secondly, there's the question of the power of prayer to influence God in the course of these events
 - Sodom and Gomorrah are certainly deserving judgment and the Lord is already determined to judge them for their sin
 - But when God agreed to honor Abraham's request, He seemed to leave the outcome of the cities in doubt
 - How does Abraham's prayer work side by side with God's sovereignty?
 - Is Abraham determining the outcome of Sodom and Gomorrah or is it God?
- Finally, we should remember that this account of Lot and Abraham offers a stunning picture of God's plan for a future judgment
 - As we observed in earlier chapters, Abraham can be seen to represent Hebrews while his believing nephew Lot can represent the Gentile believer
 - Lot is blessed by his association with Abraham, as we will see

[Gen. 19:9](#) But they said, "Stand aside." Furthermore, they said, "This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them." So they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door.

[Gen. 19:10](#) But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door.

[Gen. 19:11](#) They struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves trying to find the doorway.

[Gen. 19:12](#) Then the two men said to Lot, "Whom else have you here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring them out of the place;

[Gen. 19:13](#) for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the LORD that the LORD has sent us to destroy it."

- We ended in v.9 last week as Lot confronted the crowd of men only to have them call him an alien

- Then they threatened to accost him
 - In fact, the tone of their statements would seem to suggest that he has so far avoided their mistreatment
 - But tonight they intend to abuse Lot
 - His time in this depraved city has run out
- So the angels (Moses is still calling them men) open the door, reach out and drag Lot back in, shutting the door after him
 - Finally in v.11 the supernatural power of these angels is revealed in the text
 - They strike the crowd with blindness
 - The word for blindness is a unique Hebrew term used only in relationship to an angelic power
 - It literally means to cause confusion, probably a dazed mental state, combined with a lack of vision
 - Notice the men were still determined to find a way into the house, even though they were blinded supernaturally
 - You might think that just the sudden occurrence of the blindness would have been enough by itself to stop the attack
 - Can we doubt how utterly depraved these men had become?
- At this point in the account, the story takes a sharp turn
 - The angels clearly begin to focus on destroying the city as judgment for its wickedness
 - They haven't taken a census or examined every person
 - Yet they are ready to begin the destruction
 - In fact, they state plainly that the Lord sent them to destroy the city
 - We could read this statement to suggest that the judgment was always to be the result for the city
 - So it wasn't necessary to seek for ten righteous

- The angels seem to know that there is no point
- They tell Lot to get his family ready to leave the city before the destruction
 - We know he has at least two daughters and a wife
 - But the daughters are betrothed to be married
 - Their future spouses are called sons-in-law since they were betrothed
 - So Lot was preparing to allow his daughters marry into the men of this city, despite what we all witnessed happening
 - What kind of future awaited this family in Sodom?
 - Lot's decision to live in this city has done so much damage already, and it would have only been worse
 - Why do the angels make this request of Lot?
 - In fact, why is Lot being given any warning at all?
 - It's clear that there aren't ten righteous in this city, so we know the Lord will go forward with His plan to destroy the city
 - We're watching the Lord at work through His angels to bring grace to His children
 - And He's working through the angels as His ministers to the elect

Heb. 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

- Now we see why the angels were involved at all
 - We wondered back in Chapter 18 why the Lord was engaged in this fact-finding trip which we knew wasn't necessary
 - God already knew the condition of the city and He knew the city's final outcome would be destruction, as it should be

- We also knew that it was part of God's plan to teach Abraham about Himself
- And it was an opportunity for God to invite Abraham into God's work through prayer
- So God appears with His angels, already determined to bring judgment to Sodom and Gomorrah
 - And the Lord purposely reveals His plan to Abraham
 - Abraham recognized the events unfolding around him, recognized the urgency to get involved, and prayed for the Lord to spare Lot
 - But Abraham used imperfect words, praying for the city to be saved rather than asking for Lot to be saved
 - Makes no difference, because the Lord knows His heart
 - And as Jesus Himself told us concerning our prayers:

[Matt. 6:8](#) "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need **before** you ask Him.

- And these angels are now standing in Sodom even though they had no real reason to visit in the form of men
 - And as we'll come to understand in the next passage, their true function is to minister to the righteous in the city

[Gen. 19:14](#) Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, "Up, get out of this place, for the LORD will destroy the city." But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

[Gen. 19:15](#) When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city."

[Gen. 19:16](#) But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the LORD was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city.

- Lot's received the warning from the angels, and he was surely convinced as to their angelic identities having just witnessed the blindness of the crowd

- So he takes their warning seriously and proceeds to call upon his family members
 - His wife and daughters are still living in his home, since the weddings haven't taken place yet
 - But his sons-in-law are living in their own homes
 - So Lot calls upon each of them during the night
 - When Lot delivers the truth, the sons-in-law assume he's joking
 - How sad is this situation for Lot?
- Remember back in Chapter 18, we considered what it said about Lot's testimony that his uncle Abraham needed to bargain God down to ten righteous
 - We noted that Lot has been living in this city for nearly 25 years as a representative of the living God
 - As a man who knows the living God and trusts in His promises, we would have expected Lot to have been a more powerful influence in that city
 - Peter tells us that Lot was concerned by what he saw there

[2Pet. 2:7](#) and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

[2Pet. 2:8](#) (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds),

- Nevertheless, Lot was unable to bring revival to the city
- But the the situation turns out to be even worse than Abraham thought
 - Lot hasn't even been able to influence his future sons-in-law into following the Lord
 - What's more, Lot's own authority in matters of God and God's word is so weak that when he brings an urgent warning late at night, the men laugh it off
 - What a sad commentary on Lot's testimony in this city
 - As we said last week, to play with fire is to be burned

- And while this world will tolerate us living among it, the price we pay for getting too attached is severe
- While we have good reason to fault Lot for his choices and the weakness of his testimony, we need to be careful
 - We can't assign him the blame for the unbelief of those around him
 - The state of a person's heart toward God is not something we control
 - We can't even set our own heart upon God and His word until and unless the Lord permits us to hear and follow
 - So clearly Lot wasn't responsible for the unbelief of his sons-in-law
 - Yet we can't deny what we see God doing everyday around us
 - He delights to use our witness and our persistence in presenting the truth in love to persuade hardened hearts to receive the truth
 - We can't pretend that our efforts are unimportant or irrelevant in the cause of building the Kingdom
 - Nor can we take credit when our message finds a receptive heart
- Having failed to persuade his sons-in-law, Lot returns to his home in the pre-dawn hours of the morning
 - Lot is conflicted about what to do next
 - He believes that judgment is coming as promised and he wants to bring his entire family with him
 - But with his sons-in-law refusing to believe his warning, Lot is paralyzed
 - He seems willing to risk his own destruction and the destruction of his family for no particular reason
 - Then the angels urged Lot once more to leave the city before judgment came

- In fact, the angels tell Lot that the judgment is so imminent, they must leave now or they will be caught up in it
- The effort taken by these angels to reach Lot tells us clearly that this was, in fact, the mission they were sent to accomplish
 - They angels didn't need to parade through the city as mortal men in order to make an evaluation
 - Their real mission was to save Lot, which was precisely what Abraham wanted, yet never asked for specifically
- Now we see them working hard as those ministering spirits (as Hebrews calls them) trying to help this righteous man to make the right decision
- Remarkably, we're told Lot hesitated
 - Hesitated? What in the world would cause a man to hesitate in light of what he knows is coming?
 - If God sent you an angel – and you knew it was an angel – and the angel told you to escape a certain death...
 - Would you hesitate?
 - What if the command to leave was so urgent that it necessitated leaving behind everything?
 - That's the condition that's been placed before Lot here
 - He's lived in this city for 25 years
 - What if I gave you that command right now?
 - Get up from where you're sitting, don't grab a thing, and begin walking out of town leaving everything behind
 - Could you do it?
- Jesus addressed this very issue on several occasions in the Gospels
 - First, Jesus taught that a willingness to leave the world behind was a legitimate test of faith

Luke 18:18 A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

[Luke 18:19](#) And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

[Luke 18:20](#) "You know the commandments, 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'"

[Luke 18:21](#) And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth."

[Luke 18:22](#) When Jesus heard this, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

[Luke 18:23](#) But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

[Luke 18:24](#) And Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!

[Luke 18:25](#) "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

[Luke 18:26](#) They who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"

[Luke 18:27](#) But He said, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God."

[Luke 18:28](#) Peter said, "Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You."

[Luke 18:29](#) And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,

[Luke 18:30](#) who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life."

- This ruler left Jesus sad – he hesitated – because he wasn't willing to believe that the riches of heaven are worth trading everything in this life
 - When Jesus then remarked that the allure of riches is a powerful barrier to faith, the disciples ask how anyone could be saved?
 - They recognized that everyone shares this same sin no matter how much we possess
 - We all want what we have and then some
 - Jesus said only by God's power is it possible to save a man, but that those who follow Christ will gain much more than they lose
 - We know Lot has always had an eye for the finer things
 - He sought for the rich valley and later for life in the city
 - As a city leader, Lot must have amassed considerable wealth

- Now he's so attached to all he has that he's ready to die for it
- Praise the Lord that He will remain faithful to His promises to us even as we are faithless to Him Who has saved us
 - Peter reminds us of this truth in recounting the story of Lot

[2Pet. 2:6](#) and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter;

[2Pet. 2:7](#) and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

[2Pet. 2:8](#) (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds),

[2Pet. 2:9](#) then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

- The Lord rescued Lot while destroying the cities as examples
- And in v.9 Peter says that this story is proof that the Lord knows how to find a way to rescue the godly while keeping the unrighteous under punishment
- But take note of what the Lord is ready to do for us
 - Peter says the Lord rescues us from temptation
 - Lot is hesitating because he is tempted
 - He has been tempted by the world and he is tempted to stay one minute longer, hoping to find some other solution
 - Some compromise that allows him to keep everything while avoiding the judgment that is coming
 - But that bargain isn't possible
 - It's never been possible except in Lot's mind
 - But now is the moment of truth
- The angels see that Lot will not save himself, so they are forced to take action

- They take each of Lot's family by the hand and bring him outside the city
- The angels save Lot from the city, removing him from the temptation that held him in place
- And this was their mission: to save the righteous in the city
 - And that was Abraham's request though he didn't ask for it
 - Abraham wanted the Lord to relent in His judgment over Sodom and Gomorrah in order to save Lot and his family
 - But there weren't ten righteous, so the city will be destroyed – yet Lot will be saved
- The angels were sent to save Lot and his family, because God already knew how many would be saved and He planned a way to do it
 - In fact, the angels each had two hands (since they appeared as men)
 - And there were exactly four people who needed to be removed from the city
 - Two angels means four hands: just the number God needed to save those He intended to save
- So when Abraham prayed to the Lord, did he accomplish anything?
 - He didn't change the Lord's plan to destroy the city
 - Though the Lord did agree to consider that plan if ten were found
 - On the other hand, the Lord did grant Abraham his desire
 - Even though Abraham didn't ask for it
 - Think about the wisdom and power of God to work through prayer
 - He knows what we want, is always already prepared to do the right thing, never changes His mind, yet allows us to see our prayers answered
 - And the whole time the purpose in our praying stays the same: to train us up in the character and nature and ways of the Lord