

## Genesis 19C (2011)

- Our study of Lot, Abraham's nephew, reaches its climax today
  - Lot received the warning of impending disaster for the city
    - He was told to gather his family and prepare to escape
    - He did his best to persuade his family but he couldn't persuade anyone
  - Finally, as Lot hesitated the angels stepped in to complete their mission to rescue Lot and his family
    - They grab Lot, his wife and his two daughters and pull them out of the city
    - But as we observed last week, the rescue the Lord provided was a rescue away from temptation, not destruction
      - Lot was paralyzed as he stood looking around at his world and all that it meant to him
      - He was so tempted by the world, he was unwilling to save himself in the face of God's coming judgment
  - And as Peter taught us last week, the Lord knows how to rescue the righteous from temptation
    - So Lot is set outside the city, and now that he is free from the temptation of his home and lifestyle, he has no reason not to leave
    - But he's still in harm's way, so he must act
    - And unfortunately, the love for the world that has captivated Lot and clouded his judgment is still operating in Lot's decisions

**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.

**Gen. 19:17** When they had brought them outside, one said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away."

**Gen. 19:18** But Lot said to them, "Oh no, my lords!

**Gen. 19:19** "Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified your lovingkindness, which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, for the disaster will overtake me and I will die;

- Lot and his family sit in the fertile valley of Arabah just outside the city walls
  - Dawn has arrived, and the judgment from God is prepared
    - Today the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and all who dwell there will come to an end
    - The destruction will be so complete, that even today archeologists debate the exact whereabouts of these cities
  - As the angels prepare to leave and begin the destruction of the city, they give Lot another command to escape
    - Previously, they told Lot to leave the city so he could survive the judgment
    - Here again, they give Lot the same command
      - Specifically, they tell Lot that the entire valley lies in harm's way
      - They must move to higher ground, to the mountains
  - Clearly, the angels didn't bring Lot far enough away to ensure his physical safety
    - They have left it to Lot to take that step
    - And now that he's been pulled away from temptation, he will find this decision much easier – or so he should
- From where Lot stands now, he has two routes for his escape
  - He could take his family and travel west, into the mountains of the Negev desert
    - This would be the logical place to go, since this is where his Uncle Abraham is sojourning

- These mountains would be familiar ground, a place he has known from the time he lived there with Abraham
    - More importantly, he would be rejoining his relative, where he could expect to receive immediate support in Abraham's wealth
  - Lot's other choice would be to go east, to the Abarim mountains of Botzrah and Petra
    - But there is nothing there for Lot, except strangers and harsh conditions
  - Interestingly, Lot chooses neither
    - In v.18 Lot protests against the angels' instructions
    - He says "Oh no my lords"
      - Lot says he can't be expected to live in the mountains
  - Looking at Lot's request closely we can understand this request as a petition, a prayer
    - In some ways, Lot's prayer is similar to Abraham's prayer
    - He begins in v.19 making an appeal to God's character and mercy and promises
      - God has promised lovingkindness (a term of covenant) to Lot on the basis of faith
      - And God is showing himself true to that promise by His willingness to rescue Lot from Sodom
    - But quickly, Lot moves to a personal appeal
      - He says he can't be expected to live in the mountains because disaster will overtake me
- There is great irony in Lot's response
  - The angels of the Lord have told Lot, escape for your life
    - The word for life in Hebrew is *nephesh*, which means soul or life
  - The angels say Lot must leave the valley physically if he want to save his physical life

- But the full sense of their command is more than merely preserving physical existence
- The angels are also telling Lot to save his soul
  - They are telling him to act to preserve his eternal rewards, to ensure his good testimony on the day of his judgment
  - If Lot wants to save his soul, he must put this world behind him
- We can see this by paying close attention to the angels' instructions
  - Do not look behind you
    - Looking behind doesn't increase his physical jeopardy
    - But it suggests longing for what you're leaving
  - Don't stay anywhere in the valley
    - The entire valley wasn't going to be destroyed, just the two cities
    - So remaining in the valley indicates an unwillingness to separate from this sinful world and all its influences
  - They want Lot to make a break from the world he united himself with
    - If he doesn't, he will suffer great physical and eternal loss
- But in response, Lot says don't make me leave this world behind or great disaster will overtake me
  - The angels have been speaking of eternal jeopardy
  - And Lot raises the concern of physical and material jeopardy
  - The angels are focused on the eternal while Lot is still stuck in the temporal
- Lot has revealed his heart clearly, and it's not a pretty sight
  - Lot's only goal and focus in life is to maintain a relationship with the physical world, and he's blind to the eternal life that follows
    - Consequently, Lot is living for the here and now and the expense of the glory that is to be revealed

- Paul came to an opposite conclusion
- Speaking about the trials of life, Paul says they are insignificant compared to the glory we will see in eternity

**Rom. 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not **worthy to be** compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

- How could we ever trade our eternal rewards for temporary ease and wealth and acceptance in this world?
- Paul joyfully traded a position of prominence and a life of wealth for the chance to glorify God in Christ and the opportunity to earn His approval in eternity

**Phil. 3:7** But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

**Phil. 3:8** More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

**Phil. 3:9** and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

**Phil. 3:10** that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

**Phil. 3:11** in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

**Phil. 3:12** Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

**Phil. 3:13** Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,

**Phil. 3:14** I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

- Paul said he counted everything, he traded everything he had in this world, counting it lost for the surpassing value of knowing Christ
  - He says he traded rubbish – literally dung – that he may press on for the goal of the prize which is found in Christ
    - By the context of Paul’s statements, the word “prize” isn’t salvation
    - This is the same world Paul uses in 1 Cor. 9:24 when he says:

[1Cor. 9:24](#) Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

- Paul is talking about an eternal inheritance or reward made available to the believer who serves God faithfully
  - And Paul traded the what the world offered – things that were merely dung – and by that trade he gained the opportunity to compete for heavenly riches
  - And Paul calls the Church to imitate him, to set aside anything that might hold us back from a life of obedience and service to God

[Heb. 12:1](#) Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

[Heb. 12:2](#) fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- Sadly, Lot takes a different path

[Gen. 19:20](#) now behold, this town is near enough to flee to, and it is small. Please, let me escape there (is it not small?) that my life may be saved.”

[Gen. 19:21](#) He said to him, “Behold, I grant you this request also, not to overthrow the town of which you have spoken.

[Gen. 19:22](#) “Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there.”

Therefore the name of the town was called Zoar.

[Gen. 19:23](#) The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar.

[Gen. 19:24](#) Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven,

[Gen. 19:25](#) and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

- Lot suggests he could exist comfortably in Zoar, a nearby town in the same valley
  - The name Zoar isn’t spoken in the same breath as Sodom and Gomorrah, but it could have been
    - The three cities were part of five cities in close proximity in the valley

- We have every reason to believe that all five shared many of the same sinful practices, though Sodom and Gomorrah have been immortalized by God's judgment
- The kings of these five cities were the allies in Chapter 14 that came together to fight the kings of the north
- So Lot is asking to remain attached to the same worldly influences that caused him this trouble
  - He is a carnal believer unwilling to separate from the world
  - And in typical fashion, Lot minimizes the impact of this compromise
    - Notice in v.20, Lot emphasizes the physical size of the town
    - He says it's small, just a little town
    - As if to say, it's not that important and not too much to ask, not too much to risk
  - Moses has been carefully drawing a contrast between Abraham and Lot, and it's coming into full view now
    - Abraham's prayer minimized the number of righteous required to ensure God's rescue for his believing nephew
    - Lot has tried to minimize the sin of an unrighteous city to ensure he could maintain a disobedient lifestyle
    - Abraham sought to magnify God's glory through a righteous outcome
    - Lot sought to magnify his earthly pleasure through a selfish outcome
- So what does the Lord do with a child like this?
  - Obviously, God could reject Lot's request, forcing Lot to do the right thing
    - The angels could drag him again into the mountains
    - But forcing Lot to move to the mountains doesn't solve the real problem in Lot's heart

- Lot's heart is set against the will of God
  - God enters into a relationship with men to glorify Himself
    - And God intends to make Lot's life a witness to God's glory one way or another
- So if Lot will not glorify God through obedience, God will use Lot as a negative example
  - He will grant Lot what he wishes to teach a lesson
- Sometimes this is how the discipline of the Lord operates, and it's a sobering thought
  - Not every door God opens for us is intended to delight us
    - Some are intended to show us the error of our ways
  - We can be a witness for the Lord through our obedience or our life can become a wreck along the side of the road for others to slow down and see and learn from
  - In truth, each of us have a mixture of both kinds of witness in our lives, but the question is where are we headed from here?
- The angels grant Lot his request
  - Maybe we should ask the same question we asked when Abraham prayed: did Lot change God's mind?
    - The answer again is the same: no
    - The Lord revealed his intentions to Abraham in Chapter 18, which was to inspect and judge Sodom and Gomorrah
    - There was never any intention to destroy Zoar
  - So when Lot asked to flee there, the angels agree since it was not part of the judgment
    - But the angels remind Lot that he must flee his present location to avoid the coming judgment
    - Showing yet again that saving Lot was the primary mission of the angels
- Then as the new day begins, God rained judgment down on Sodom and Gomorrah



- The exact manner of judgment is a bit of a mystery, as it should be given it was a supernatural event
  - We can understand the term “fire” but we can’t understand how fire comes down from the sky
  - Secondly, the word brimstone is an unknown word
    - It comes from the same Hebrew word as gopher, as in gopher wood; the wood used in the ark
    - We don’t know what gopher wood was and we don’t know what brimstone is
    - But it doesn’t sound good
  - Whatever happened, it destroyed the cities to the point where virtually nothing remains
    - They were literally wiped off the map
- Archeologists who have excavated the area have found evidence of five large ancient cities located on the eastern side of the southern end of the Dead Sea
  - Only one is still inhabited today, that is Zoar
  - These cities appear to have been very prosperous in their day, as their tombs appear to hold over a million skeletons
  - The area today is dominated by unusual rock formations high in sulphur, which is different from the surrounding geology
- The message God sends by such a destruction is clear: God will judge sin utterly and completely
  - In this day God’s judgment was limited in scope and in time
  - God judged only two cities and only at a moment in time
    - But he wants us to learn a lesson from this example
  - In a day to come, God will repeat this judgment on a worldwide scale, eventually extinguishing the sinner forever

**[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;**

- While these cities are exhibited as examples for the ungodly, Lot is the Bible's example for the believer who would walk in the ways of the world
  - But Lot's failure to live a life that honors his witness, particularly as a spiritual leader in his home as a husband and father to his family, has terrible consequences
  - He and his family begin to walk toward Zoar
    - But as he does, Lot's influence on his family comes full circle

**Gen. 19:26** But his wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

- Lot's wife goes unnamed in Scripture
  - But her example lives on
  - She must have been taken from among the Sodomites, so Sodom is her home town
- But her union has left her without a faith in God's promises
  - And in the moment when she is tested, she reveals her true heart
- Jesus reminds us of this example when he taught the disciples about the power of God's judgment to separate the wheat from the chaff, the believer from the unbeliever

**Luke 17:26** " And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:

**Luke 17:27** they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

**Luke 17:28** " It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;

**Luke 17:29** but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

**Luke 17:30** "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.

**Luke 17:31** "On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back.

**Luke 17:32** "Remember Lot's wife.

**Luke 17:33** "Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

- Jesus says remember Lot's wife...remember her example
  - She was attached to Lot by marriage
  - And by that relationship we might have assumed she was in agreement with her husband in having faith in God's promises
    - That she was a saint
  - But Jesus tells us to remember her example as one who lost her life
    - She sought to save her physical, earthly life because she loved it more than the Lord
    - And in making that choice, she revealed her true heart
  - She was an unbeliever who lived for the world only
    - And her backward glance, in disobedience to the angels' orders, became God's mechanism to reveal her unbelieving heart
    - As Jesus said

**Luke 9:62** But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

- Why does God turn her to salt?
  - The Bible uses salt as a metaphor for spiritual witness to the world
    - As Jesus taught this same principle to His disciples

**Matt. 5:13** "You are the **salt** of the earth; but if the **salt** has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

- Salt is a seasoning that sharpens flavor, makes it more distinctive
  - Salt is also a preservative and a fertilizer
- In all these ways, salt pictures the effect of the believer in the world

- We draw a distinction between God and the world, His ways and the world's ways
    - We stand apart from the world to show God's truth in the face of the world's lies
  - We are also a preservative in the sense that we are the remnant preserving God's promises during this time of waiting for Christ's return
  - Finally, we are a fertilizer, as God plants His word in the hearts of men, we help it grow through discipling and encouraging
- But if we don't maintain our saltiness, that is the strength of our witness and holy living, how can we serve the purposes God has decreed?
- If we give God no other choice, He will make our lives into an example in the way of Lot's wife
  - We can stand as a witness by how we live our life or in how God ends our lives
  - Because Lot's wife wasn't a witness to the truth in her life, she becomes an example for evermore in her disobedience and death
    - We don't even know her name...yet still she is infamous