

Sodom & Gomorrah

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Preacher: Rob Attridge

[0 : 00] Great to see you all this morning. I just want to give a very warm welcome to any visitors who are here with us this morning. It's so nice to have you with us. Well, this morning we're going to be continuing our series in the book of Genesis.

And that means this morning we are coming to look at all that happened at Sodom and Gomorrah. Now, I think for a lot of people, whether they've gone to church or not, or whether they've read the Bible much or not, it seems that a lot of people have heard of Sodom and Gomorrah because of all that happened there.

It really is quite something. Now, as we look at the account of all that did happen at Sodom and Gomorrah, you'll see on the screen there that it spans over two chapters.

So it goes from Genesis chapter 18 all the way to Genesis chapter 19, the end of Genesis chapter 19. Now, I'm not going to read all of that this morning, but what I am going to read is three verses that come towards the very end of the Sodom and Gomorrah account, the very end of Genesis chapter 19.

I'm going to read these three verses because these three verses are known to some as the summary verses, if you like, of all that happened at Sodom and Gomorrah.

[1 : 22] These three verses kind of in a nutshell get to the point and tell us what happened. Of course, we have to look back for more details, and you can read it later to look at more details.

But I'm going to read these three summary verses, and then what I'm hoping to do is, with the Lord's help, very briefly just kind of give an overview, a kind of a bird's eye view of what we see at Sodom and Gomorrah.

So that's the plan anyway, and we'll see how it goes. So Genesis chapter 19, verses 23 to 25, what are known to some as the summary verses of Sodom and Gomorrah.

By the time Lot reached Zor, the sun had risen over the land. Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah from the Lord out of the heavens.

Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities and also the vegetation in the land.

[2 : 34] Well, that's quite something, isn't it? These three verses, they really do get to the point and tell us in a very kind of sharp way what happened at Sodom and Gomorrah.

Sodom and Gomorrah and everything that was in them were totally destroyed by the Lord. It really is quite something. Let's just pray together.

Lord, as we come to this passage, we come to, in some ways, from our perspective, a difficult passage. We just look for your help. Lord, I pray you'd lead us and guide us as we consider all that happened at Sodom and Gomorrah.

In Jesus' name, amen. So in kind of an overview kind of a way, what do we see at Sodom and Gomorrah? What can we take away this morning from Sodom and Gomorrah?

Well, I think as we look over these couple of chapters, I think two kind of basic themes kind of rise to the surface. And those two themes are judgment and grace.

[3 : 41] The judgment of God and the grace of God. Or as someone else put it, the destruction of God and the deliverance of God.

Now, I think the theme of the judgment of God or the destruction of God perhaps seems more obvious to us as we look at these chapters. I think we can clearly see God's judgment here in Sodom and Gomorrah.

But what I think can often be missed is the grace of God that we see at Sodom and Gomorrah. The deliverance of God that we see at Sodom and Gomorrah.

I think both of these things are evident in these chapters. So I think in order to truly grasp what the Lord has for us in these passages, in these couple of chapters, I think we need to kind of take both on board.

We need to consider both. So first, let's briefly look at the judgment of God that we see at Sodom and Gomorrah. Well, Sodom and Gomorrah were wicked, wicked places.

[4 : 51] In Genesis chapter 13, when Abraham and Lot first separated, we're told in chapter 13, verse 13, that the people of Sodom were wicked and they were sinning greatly against the Lord.

To add to that, in Genesis chapter 18, verse 20, the Lord speaking about Sodom and Gomorrah said, the outcry against them is so great and their sin is so grievous.

What kind of things were going on there? Well, we're told a few examples. And one example is this. And it's not very nice. In Genesis chapter 19, verses 4 to 5, and I kind of want to say this in a way that's kind of sensitive, but in Genesis chapter 14, verses 4 to 5, we're told that all of the men of Sodom, of every age, went out to find the men who visited Lot.

So they could essentially force the men who visited Lot to do intimate things with them all. The men in Sodom, of every age, went out to hunt down these two visitors who visited Lot so they could force them to do these things with them all.

That's what we read in these verses. Basically, what was going on in Sodom is as wicked as we could imagine, and then some more.

[6 : 28] Recently, I was looking at something, and this little group were trying to rate the most wicked city in the world. And I'm not sure how they kind of came up with the measurements for that, but anyway, that's what they were doing.

So they picked one city on every continent that they thought were the most wicked cities. And then out of those cities, they picked what they felt was the number one most wicked city in the world. Well, if that rating was done in Abraham's day, I think Sodom and Gomorrah would come out number one on that list.

It was a wicked place, an evil place, a dark place. Well, in judgment for the people's wickedness, the Lord acted.

I'm just going to read verses 24 and 25 again. The Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah from the Lord out of the heavens.

[7 : 35] Thus he overthrew those two cities and the entire plain, destroying all living in the cities and also the vegetation in the land.

I think that if there is any doubt in our minds, how our God views wickedness, I think that this passage and these verses should remove any doubt.

You see, before our holy God, he is totally holy. And before him, all sin, all wickedness needs to be judged and paid for.

And that's really what we see here in these verses. In these verses, we see sin being judged and paid for. But God's judgment and destruction is not all that we see in these verses.

Thank you, Lord, that your judgment and destruction is not all that we see in these verses. Because in these verses, we also see our God's amazing grace.

[8 : 45] Judgment and destruction is not the end of the story here at Sodom and Gomorrah. And judgment and destruction is not the end of our story as believers. So in what way do we see God's grace in this passage?

Well, I want to point out two expressions of God's grace that we see at Sodom and Gomorrah. I actually think that there are more than two, but I'm going to point out what I think are the main two expressions of God's grace that we see here in this passage.

Number one, we see God's grace of warning. We see his grace in warning that judgment is coming. In chapter 19 and verse 12 and 13, God, through two angels, graciously warned Lot of the coming judgment. And they encouraged Lot to tell others, to warn others.

The two angels basically said to Lot, go and tell anyone you care about, anyone who's with you, anyone who will basically listen, to get out of here because judgment is coming.

[9 : 58] This is what the two angels said to Lot. Do you have anyone else here, sons-in-laws, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you?

Get them out of here because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.

Number two, we see God's grace of warning that judgment is coming. That judgment is coming. Some will listen to that. Some won't listen to that.

But his grace of warning that judgment is coming is there. Number two, we see God's grace of deliverance in this passage.

When the Lord was destroying these two cities, Lot lingered. In his weakness, he lingered. But by God's grace of deliverance, in delivering those who are his, these two angels took Lot by the hand and led him out of the city.

[11 : 08] This is what we read in Genesis 19, 15 and 16. With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, Hurry, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished.

When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them.

We see interwoven in this passage, in these chapters, the Lord's grace of warning, warning that judgment is coming.

And we see his grace of deliverance, that he will deliver those who are his from that judgment. We see both God's grace and his judgment in this passage.

We see both his destruction and his deliverance. Well, I think that both of these things are relevant for us to consider this morning, because I think here is the thing.

[12 : 20] When it comes down to it, it will, in a sense, ultimately be one of these two things for each one of us, in that each one of us at the end of the day will either face God's eternal judgment for sin, or we will, by God's grace, be forgiven and set free and protected and delivered from our sin.

I think that passages like this, when we come to them, and maybe passages like the flood, somehow do remind us that it will be judgment or grace for each one of us.

And here is the thing, what we deserve is judgment. We might think that we deserve God's grace, but we don't.

You know, we might look at the people of Sodom, and we might think that they have done far worse things than us. And maybe in some ways that is true. Maybe in some ways they have done far worse things than us.

But as we're told in Romans chapter 3, verse 23, all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. Basically meaning that each one of us, in our own way, in many ways, have made mistakes.

[13 : 42] And we've all messed up. In that sense, we've all sinned. We might not have done what the people did in Sodom and Gomorrah. But in our own ways, and in many ways, we have all made mistakes.

So I think that we are all in the same camp of deserving judgment. That judgment might not come in this life as burning sulfur.

In fact, I do not think that it will. I think what happened at Sodom and Gomorrah seems to be something that the Lord did very, very seldom and is not normative. But in terms of God's eternal judgment for sin, that is something that we all deserve.

But here is the thing. The good news is this. The incredible good news for every single one of us this morning is God, by his mercy and his grace, has provided a way for every single one of us to be totally set free from this judgment.

By his mercy and grace, our God has provided a way for each one of us, every single one of us, to be totally delivered and set free from any judgment from sin.

[14 : 58] And incredibly, the way that he has provided that for each one of us, the way that he has provided this freedom and deliverance for each one of us was to judge his own son on the cross on our behalf.

God's way to set us free from eternal judgment for sin was to crush and destroy his own son on the cross in our place.

On the cross, Jesus, God the Son, he took on himself the judgment for sin that we deserve. He took all of our sin, past, present, and future on himself.

And with his own perfect life, he paid the price in full for every single bit of it. So that when we simply believe and accept what he did for us, we can be totally set free from God's eternal judgment and we can have life.

And life to the full, we can experience eternal life with him forever and ever. It's kind of like when people say, do you want the good news or the bad news first?

[16:09] Well, in my experience, most people tend to say, you know, give me the bad news first. And then I think the hope is maybe the good news will outweigh the bad news.

Well, I suppose that the bad news is that we all deserve God's eternal judgment for sin. And his judgment for sin is real.

But the good news, it far outweighs the bad news. The good news is God, by his grace, has provided a way for us all to be totally set free from any judgment, any eternal judgment for sin, through simply trusting and believing in what Jesus did for us on the cross.

He paid the price for us so that we do not need to pay it ourselves. So I think this morning, just with what this passage brings up, these passages are difficult.

But with what this passage brings up, I just want to encourage anyone who maybe senses in some way that they have not yet, I suppose, accepted our Lord's saving grace through Jesus.

[17:24] To accept it, to believe and accept and receive what Jesus has done for you. To accept our God's saving grace through Jesus.

Because that is there for every single one of us to simply receive and to accept. Imagine that, how wonderful it really is when we think about it.

That when we trust in Jesus and trust that he paid the price for our sin, we can know that we will never, ever face God's eternal judgment for sin.

Instead, we will know him and be with him forever. And when our time comes, we will go to that place where there is no more pain or suffering or sadness or tears or death.

When we simply believe and accept what he did for us. So this morning, as I said, with what this passage brings up, I just want to encourage you, if you haven't already, to receive our Lord's saving grace.

[18:34] That is there for each one of us. And if you're here this morning, on the other hand, and if you have already accepted or received our Lord's saving grace, well then for you, you can freshly rejoice because you have been set free.

You have been forgiven and set free. You've been given eternal life and life to the full. You will never, ever face his eternal judgment for sin. That's where you stand because of what he has done for you.

And nothing will ever, ever snatch you out of his hand. So let's pray together. And then we're going to sing, Jesus paid it all.

Lord, I just thank you for the simple reminder this morning in your word that your judgment is real.

And Lord, when we come to these passages, they feel difficult from our perspective to consider.

But Lord, we thank you that judgment and destruction is not the end of the story. Lord, it could well have easily been, and that would have been fair and just.

[19:40] But know by your grace, you have provided a way for every single one of us to be forgiven and set free and totally delivered from any judgment for sin.

So we thank you for what you've done for us, Lord. I just pray we'd be encouraged by the fresh reminder that we have been set free. Lord, help us now as we respond, as we sing praises to you.

In Jesus' name, amen. So Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow.

Let's worship our Lord together.