

Genesis Ch19v1-38 - Righteous Lot?

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[0 : 0 0] turn to Genesis chapter 19, where we'll be doing our study from. Thank you. It's lovely to be with you again as we turn to God's Word.

And I have to thank Johnny for leaving this chapter to me. That's very nice of you, Jonathan. I'll use that name. I know your mother uses that when she's not pleased with you. So thank you, Jonathan, for the opportunity to look at this this morning.

I just put the title on it, Righteous Lot, with a question mark. The New Testament calls Lot righteous Lot. And really, when we read the chapter in front of us, you really ask, really, righteous Lot.

And it's easy to sit in judgment on someone else, another believer in another time and another culture, and how that culture infects them and their thinking and their behavior, without at the same time realizing how much our culture pervades our lives and our thinking.

And even as we read this chapter, you might find yourself responding to it in ways that reveal just how much our culture has infected us and our thinking and our responses to God's Word.

[1 : 2 6] So let's be aware of that as we hear God's Word this morning and as we read it together. It's the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. A very somber story.

But we trust at the same time that it is written for our instruction and for our good, that we might learn more about who God is and we might put greater trust in his Son. So let's read Genesis 19 together.

It follows on just after Abraham has prayed for the city of Sodom, where God has revealed to him that the destruction is coming. And then we read, The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city.

When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. My lords, he said, please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning.

No, they answered, we will spend the night in the square. But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate.

[2 : 3 7] Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom, both young and old, surrounded the house. They called to Lot, Where are the men who came to you tonight?

Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them. Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, No, my friends, don't do this wicked thing.

Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.

Get out of our way, they replied. This fellow came here as a foreigner, and now he wants to play the judge. We'll treat you worse than them. They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door.

But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness, so that they could not find the door.

[3 : 44] The two men said to Lot, Do you have anyone else here, sons-in-law, 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. So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters.

He said, Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city. But his sons-in-law thought he was joking. 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.

As soon as they brought them out, one of them said, Flee for your lives, don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain. Flee to the mountains, or you will be swept away.

[4 : 57] But Lot said to them, No, my lords, please, your servant has found favour in your eyes, and you have shown great kindness to me in spurring my life. But I can't flee to the mountains.

This disaster will overtake me, and I'll die. Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small. Let me flee to it. It's very small, isn't it?

Then my life will be spared. He said to him, Very well, I will grant this request too. I will not overthrow the town you speak of, but flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it.

This is why the town was called Zoar. By the time Lot reached Zoar, 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. But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

[6 : 04] Early the next morning, Abram got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the Lord. He looked down towards Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.

So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived. Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar.

He and his two daughters lived in a cave. One day the older daughter said to the younger, Our father is old, and there is no man around here to give us children, as is the custom all over the earth.

Let's get our father to drink wine, and then sleep with him, and preserve our family line through our father. That night they got their father to drink wine, and the older daughter went in and slept with him.

He was not aware of it when she lay down, or when she got up. The next day the older daughter said to the younger, Last night I slept with my father. Let's get him to drink wine again tonight, and you go in and sleep with him, so that we can preserve our family line through our father.

[7 : 19] So they got their father to drink wine that night also, and the younger daughter went in and slept with him. Again, he was not aware of it when she lay down, or when she got up. So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father.

The older daughter had a son, and she named him Moab. He is the father of the Moabites of today. The younger daughter also had a son, and she named him Ben-Ami.

He is the father of the Ammonites of today. Now we're going to end the reading there, and somehow we're going to work our way through that together.

In recent years there's been much talk, haven't there, about our carbon footprints, the effects which the energy that we use has upon the world in which we live.

And when you purchase certain products or services, you can pay a little extra to offset your carbon footprint, and perhaps your ecological conscience. There's little interest, however, in what we might call our moral footprint, the effects of the moral choices that we make in life.

[8 : 32] But we need to make no mistake that our moral choices have an effect upon those who come after us. The wickedness that we see in the city of Sodom didn't just happen overnight.

It's the result of the moral footprint of previous generations who've had a disregard of God's commands, a disregard for human dignity, and a selfish pursuit of personal pleasure.

What we see in Sodom is, first of all, a complete disregard for God's commands, and in particular in the area of sexuality.

Now, Sodom was obviously a place that celebrated unrestrained sexual freedom. Look at the crowd who gather outside Lot's house.

There described all the men from every part of the city of Sodom, both young and old. There was no part of society which was untouched by this unrestrained sexual freedom.

[9 : 47] And many of these men that we read of here had their own wives and children. It's a picture of a society that has completely thrown off the commands of God.

Now, we live in a part of the world that other cultures in the world despise for that very reason, because of its immorality. There are many people in the world who reject Christianity not because of our beliefs, but because they associate Christianity with the sexual immorality of the Western world.

They look on at these so-called Christian countries and are horrified at the immorality that they see. Now, if we're truly Christians, we need to reject all expressions of sexual immorality.

All expressions of sexual immorality. Christians are often presented as people, aren't we, who are fixated with homosexuality as though that were the only thing that concerned us.

But the truth is that we're also concerned about a whole host of other unrestrained sexual freedoms. whether it's extramarital affairs that people are celebrated for pursuing and being brave enough to pursue, whether it's rebounding polygamy as a throuple, or whether it's just simply accepting that premarital sex is the norm to be pursued.

[11 : 23] As true Christians and followers of Jesus, we need to see all of these as a disregard of the commands of God and call one another to live by a different standard from the world around us.

You see, sin is always, above everything else, a rebellion against the God who made us for himself. God's word teaches us that the place for sexual relationships is within the confines of a lifelong marriage between a man and a woman, and when we choose to pursue anything other than that, we are rebelling against the God who made us.

We're simply telling him that we know better and that we will pursue our desires irrespective of his commands. But the wickedness of Sodom goes way beyond disregard for God's laws in the area of sexuality.

And rebellion against God always results in a lack of love and concern for others. And what we see in Sodom is a complete disregard for human dignity.

You see, the sin of Sodom isn't only sexual sin, it is violent sexual sin. These men that gather outside Lot's house don't care about these men that Lot has invited into his house.

[12 : 58] These men are simply the objects of their lusts. They will take these men by force.

You see, a disregard for God's laws always results in a disregard for human dignity. And we can see the effects of this even in Lot himself.

He treats his daughters, his young daughters, as objects with which he can barter, offering them to the men outside if they will only leave his guests alone.

You see, most sexual sins are not only a disregard of God's law, but a complete disregard of human dignity. Treating other people as objects to satisfy our own desires.

Whether it's prostitution, pornography, sexual abuse, domestic abuse, even what we conveniently call casual sex, all shows a complete disregard for human dignity.

[14 : 13] Treating other people as objects to satisfy our desires. And the sad reality that we have to face is that that is where all sin leads.

a disregard for God's commands and a disregard for human dignity in the selfish pursuit of personal pleasure. The city of Sodom reveals where that pursuit ends up with such wickedness that God must bring judgment on this city.

And what is true of the city of Sodom is true of each one of us as individual people. We can't disregard the commands of God and we can't disregard human dignity in the pursuit of our own pleasure and expect that we will escape the judgment of God.

Because God is a holy and just God who must bring judgment on human sin. now when Jesus was on earth he warned of a greater sin than that of Sodom.

As he sent his disciples out into towns and villages declaring the arrival of the kingdom of God he warned them that while some places would welcome them in other places they would be rejected.

[15 : 48] And Jesus said of those towns I tell you the truth it will be more bearable on that day that is the day of God's judgment for Sodom than for that town.

What could be an even greater sin than that of Sodom? A greater sin than the selfish pursuit of personal pleasure without any regard for the commands of God or for human dignity?

Well it is the rejection of God's Son Jesus it's the rejection of the one who came to rescue us from the selfish pursuit of our pleasure it's the rejection of the one who came to restore us in the image of God so that we might once again love God and love other people as we were intended to from the very beginning that is the greater sin than the sin of Sodom and you can be a very moral person who is disturbed by the sin that you see in the world all around you but if you are not disturbed by the sin of your own heart so that you see your own need of Jesus Jesus warns you that it will be more bearable for Sodom than for you on that day of God's judgment as God's judgment is announced and the destruction of Sodom foretold we see a number of different responses in the chapter don't we there are those who simply laugh at the coming judgment those who cling to what will be destroyed and those who are rescued by God's mercy first this response of

Lot's son-in-laws who simply think it's all a joke they don't take Lot's warning seriously they're very much a part of the city of Sodom and they are going to share Sodom's fate doesn't the apostle Peter warn of those who will simply laugh at any talk of coming judgment in 2 Peter 3 he says you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come scoffing following their own desires they will say where is this coming he promised ever since our fathers died everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation any talk of coming judgment is simply something to be laughed at and ridiculed but Peter warns then that people have to forget God's judgments in the past you have to ignore the flood in the time of Noah you have to ignore the destruction of the city of

Sodom and there will always be those who laugh at coming judgment and keep following their own evil desires and sadly that was the response of Lot's sons-in-law and they would face the fate of Sodom but there are also those in this story who cling to what will be destroyed did you notice Lot and his wife and his children they're literally dragged out of the city by these angels sent to rescue them they hesitate and once they're out of the city the angels warn them to flee to the mountains and not look back but Lot is still reluctant to go he sees another nearby town and asks if he can go there instead he finds it so hard to pull himself away from the city of Sodom it's for this reason that Derek

[19 : 46] Kidner calls Lot the righteous man without the pilgrim spirit yes Lot had a real and living faith in the one true God yes Lot was disturbed by all the sin that went on around him and yet he was still attracted by what had first drawn him to Sodom in the first place in a lot of ways Sodom had been good for Lot he seems to have prospered financially he seems to have got to a place of recognition and honour in the city and now that he's got that well it's so hard to pull yourself away from it to let go of what will be destroyed can't we too live our lives for what will one day be destroyed whether it's financial prosperity the honour of other people we can be righteous that is right with

God but without a pilgrim spirit the knowledge that this is not where we belong and that we belong somewhere else Lot's wife looks back and she will become a warning to all future generations Jesus would simply say remember Lot's wife whoever tries to keep his life will lose it and whoever loses his life will preserve it you see she loved this world too much and simply was clinging on to what would be destroyed and if we are living our lives only for this world then we too will perish with this world but there were also those in this story who are rescued by God's mercy and nothing but God's mercy

Lot and his daughters let's face it they're not model believers but they did listen to the words of the angels regarding the coming judgment and they obeyed the command not to look back now they couldn't take any credit for any of that it has all been of God's mercy he has literally dragged them out of the city but the Lord had remembered the request of Abram and had not destroyed the righteous with the wicked now there's little from Lot's life that many of us would call righteous but strangely that's how the New Testament refers to him in 2 Peter 2 and verses 7 and 8 Lot's described as a righteous man who is distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men indeed we're told that this righteous man living among them day after day was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard now just in case you didn't believe it it's repeated three times isn't it

Lot was a righteous man he was a believer in the one true God but he had made many foolish choices in life he's not being held up to us as a good example we're not being encouraged to rush out and buy his new best selling book how to get the most out of this world and still be saved from destruction that's what some of us want isn't it how can I run around with the friends who party and get drunk and sleep around and still be saved from God's judgment how can I be rich and honoured and people look on me well and still get through this world without facing God's judgment as though we can have the best of both worlds well that's not what Lot would be encouraging his book would more likely be called rescued from a life that was wasted

I'm sure it wouldn't sell as many copies but are probably worth more reading destruction did come upon Sodom and the remains of Sodom would be a continual reminder of what happens to those who live in rebellion against God but when I talk about the remains of Sodom I'm not just talking about the ashes that are left on the ground after its destruction they were also in the hearts of those who had been rescued from Sodom we have a saying I'm sure you've heard it that you can take the boy out of the street but you can't take the street out of the boy well we see a very similar thing here in the lives of Lot's daughters you can take the girls out of Sodom but it's much harder to take Sodom out of the girls you see Lot's daughters had grown up surrounded by the immorality of the city of

[25 : 07] Sodom and in the rest of the story we see the profound impact that Sodom had had upon them Lot and his daughters abandoned Zoar and they choose to live alone in the mountains time is ticking by and the daughters are presented with a problem their father's getting old they have no husbands there's no prospect of children they need to preserve the family line and they hatch a plan that reveals the effect that Sodom has had upon them they plan to get their father drunk so that the eldest daughter can sleep with him in the hope of becoming pregnant the next night they repeat the same thing again with the younger daughter you see the remains of Sodom can be seen in the hearts of Lot's daughters they have no thought of God's commands they have no thought of their father's dignity their only thought is the selfish pursuit of their own desires

Sodom is alive and well in the hearts of Lot's daughters others Jesus warned that it is from the heart that all kinds of evil come when we fail to love God and love others as we were made to do we set our hearts upon the selfish pursuit of our own desires others and the beginning of the Christian life is realizing that I don't love God and I don't love others and that I need my heart to be changed if I'm ever going to it's the very reason that Jesus came to rescue us from the desires of our own hearts and where they ultimately lead so that we might once again love the God who made us and love others as we should the remains of Sodom however stretch much further than the hearts of

Lot's daughters at the end of the chapter were pointed to the history of Lot's descendants the Moabites and the Ammonites if you're to follow on the story a little bit further what you'll discover is that the Moabites would later lead the Israelites into sexual sin and the worship of Baal the Ammonites would refuse to allow Israel to pass through their land when they were trying to escape from Egypt the descendants of Lot would continually trouble the descendants of Abraham the remains of Sodom lived on long after the city had been destroyed yes Lot may have been a righteous man one who believed in the one true God and was rescued from the destruction of Sodom but we're not meant to ignore the consequences of Lot's choices what I called at the beginning his moral footprints and they're here as a warning for us the sinful choices that we make have a lasting impact in the lives first of all of our children and then in the generations that are to come and there is no amount of money that you can pay to offset your moral footprints so what kind of footprints are you leaving behind in contrast to Sodom and to

Lot Abraham was leaving a legacy of faith of one who simply believed God's promise who left everything trusting God with his future and though Abraham was not without his feelings he is held up to us as a man of faith as an example worth following let us pray that God might grant us grace to be the same let's pray together father we know how easy it is to sit in judgment as we look on at the lives of others and even as we read the life of another from a completely different time and a completely different culture and I pray that rather than doing that you would help us to turn our eyes towards ourselves and our own hearts to recognize the deceitfulness of sin in our own lives to recognize the ways in which we have shown a disregard to your commands and a disregard to the dignity of other individuals and may that cause us to turn from the selfish pursuit of our own desires may it cause us to see that we are people in need of rescue and that that rescue cannot be found in something that we do or something that we pay but is found only in your son who would give himself to pay the price that would deal with our sin forever father father we thank you for the joy of knowing sins forgiven but we pray that you would help us to grasp something of the reality of the consequences of our sinful choices and may that caution us as to how we live our lives protect us from being people who scoff at the thought of a coming judgment protect us from clinging on to things that will one day be destroyed but rather may we be people who rejoice in the mercy that is shown to us in

Jesus who has in the same way that the angels grabbed Lot and his daughters and took them out of the city grabbed us and dragged us out of the kingdom of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the son you love and we ask this in Jesus name amen now as we close we're going to stand together and sing our closing song and my hope is built on nothing less new to to