

The Judge who does right

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 March 2022

Preacher: Chris Lowe

[0 : 00] The so what of Genesis 19 seems to me to be very, very clear and very, very urgent! You've got to flee. Like Lot and his daughters, you've got to flee for your life and not look! Or you will be swept away. Turning your back on a life of rebellion against God and sin, you've got to flee from the coming judgment and you must flee to the Lord Jesus Christ.

All people everywhere, Russian presidents, British teenagers, you must run to Jesus and put your faith in him. Because through Jesus Christ, you and I and all people who come to him can be rescued from the destruction that's coming. Today, this Sunday morning, you must flee to the one who can save you.

Now, I don't know what you made of Genesis 19, this reading, just now. Abraham's bartering prayer, the sodomites' demand for sex, the burning sulphur from heaven, Lot's wife becoming a pillar of salt.

It is the kind of Old Testament passage that makes people turn away from the Bible in disgust and disbelief. But I want to say right up front, Genesis 18 and 19 is from God, in his word, for us today. And it's all about the coming judgment of God. At the beginning, in chapter 18, verse 16, do you see this? When the men got up to leave Abraham and Sarah's tent, they looked down towards Sodom. And they'd have seen in the distance a small but busy city of people, eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building.

[1 : 54] Forward to the end of the passage, in chapter 19, verse 28, over the page. And now Abraham looked down towards Sodom and Gomorrah, towards all the land of the plain, and he saw now dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.

At the beginning, buying and selling, happy. At the end, dense smoke rising. And this tale of destroying judgment is for us, because the destruction of this city a few thousand years ago stands here in the Bible as a foretaste and a warning.

It's a God-given foretaste of what will one day come on the whole earth. So I asked for that reading from Luke 17. Jesus himself teaches this. Listen.

In the days of Lot, says Jesus, people were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed, says Jesus. Do you see that? On the future day, when the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, is revealed from heaven in blazing fire as judge of all, it will be just like this. Except on that day it will be for all. It will be for the whole earth.

[3 : 24] And because the destruction of Sodom is a foretaste of what is coming, it is a warning. It's a gracious warning from our Creator and our judge.

God wants to open our eyes to the reality of his coming in future judgment. And so through this passage this morning, he wants to warn us so that we will act now.

So that we will turn to him and flee to him so that we might be saved from destruction. So will we? Will we flee from the wrath to come and will we flee to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Come back to the start of the verses that were read and let's follow through the main line together of what takes place. Here's the first point from the end of Genesis 18. The judge of all the earth will do right.

He will do right, the judge of all the earth. In 18 verse 16, we're with the three men who'd come to visit Abraham's tent, the lot, the Lord and two angels.

[4 : 34] And in verse 16, when the men got up to leave, they looked down towards Sodom and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. And then the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham what I'm about to do?

Sodom was one of the cities of the plain by the Jordan River. And back in chapter 13 of Genesis, Abraham's nephew had chosen to go and live there. And we were told in Genesis 13, 13, the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.

Now, what is the Lord about to do with this city before him? Skip down to verse 20. Then the Lord said, the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they've done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me.

And if not, I will know. We rightly say from one angle that all sin is wrong. And to be a creature of God and rebel against him and disobey his commands and fail to love him.

However we show that, that's wrong. But in the Bible there is sin which is especially grievous to God. There are sins that are more cruel, more twisted, more offensive.

[5 : 52] There is sin that's detestable in God's eyes. And the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah's grievous sin reaches up to God. Maybe that's the cries of those who are being sinned against in the city.

Or just the wickedness itself which cries out to be judged. And the Lord says, I will go down and see if what they've done is as bad as the cries I'm hearing.

Because he will do right, our God. If you like, he's not a God who will stand far off and pass judgment broadly on what he hears.

He's not quite like us. He won't catch a bit of news on the radio of an atrocity far away. And read half a Facebook post here and interact with a few tweets and then pass judgment.

But not really, no. No. I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. He will step down into the city and see for himself.

[7 : 00] And then he will judge justly. As he will on the final day of judgment. When our hearts and our lives are laid bare before his eyes.

We won't be judged on hearsay or rumour by a far away God. Nor will we be able to hide away our sins from him. He will see us truly and judge us justly.

In verse 22, the two looking like men, but actually angels, turn away and go towards Sodom to see. But Abraham remains standing before the Lord. And then, do you see what happens? Abraham approached God and said, will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? He's imploring God to act justly and do what's right.

If in that city there are people who follow you and love you and call on your name, you won't sweep them away along with the wicked, will you? What if there are 50 righteous people in the city?

[8 : 02] Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the 50 righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing. To kill the righteous with the wicked. Treating the righteous and the wicked alike.

Far be it from you. Will not the judge of all the earth do right? What an important verse that is. Will not the judge of all the earth do right?

He is the judge of all the earth. Because this is his world. He made it and us. He owns it and us.

He's the rightful judge of all. And he will do right, surely. He will judge justly. Won't you, Lord? He will.

If I find 50 righteous people in the city of Sodom, even if I find 10, says the Lord, I will spare the city and not destroy it.

[9 : 01] He won't sweep away the righteous with the wicked. There will be no wrong judgment. There will be no undeserved judgment on Sodom. Nor on our world.

For the judge of all the earth will do right. And so. At the start of chapter 19, the two angels arrived in Sodom in the evening.

It's about to get dark. Now, Lot was there in the gateway, sees them and he bows down to them. He says, come to my house. He's hospitable. He welcomes them in. He's being righteous.

But the angels say to him, no, no, no. We'll spend the night in the town square. Do you know, there's bits even of Cambridge where you really don't want to be after dark.

And for two men to spend the night in Sodom town square, don't do it. Lot knows that. He knows what the people of Sodom are like.

[10 : 02] And he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. And they enter his house and he provides for them. Before they'd gone to bed, verse 4, 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. Notice here, it's all the men, young and old, from all.

It's the whole city. And this wicked thing they want to do. It's not just a lack of hospitality, so obviously.

It's not just homosexual sex. Although the Bible teaches that all sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman, including homosexual sex, is immoral.

Sometimes detestable and perverted. But here in Sodom, they are intent on abusive homosexual gang rape.

[11:13] They say, bring them out to us. And we should read this and say, along with the other sins of Sodom that the Bible mentions, adultery and lying and arrogance and crushing the poor and needy and sexual perversion, what wickedness this is.

Lot goes out bravely. He speaks, don't do this wicked thing. And then, appallingly, desperately, take my daughters instead, but not these men who've come under my roof.

But the men say, get out of our way, we're coming in. And they push and they shove. Until the angels inside reach out and grab Lot back in and shut the door and strike the men outside with blindness.

We live in a world, you know, where people are wicked and sin greatly against the Lord. Where, rebelling against God's commands, humanity can spiral downward so quickly from seemingly nice, polite selfishness to this.

And we need to know, thank God, that the judge of all the earth who sees and knows he will do right. He will.

[12:41] And here in Sodom, he does. In verse 12 onwards, see what takes place, the Lord having seen and knowing what happened in Sodom.

First of all, the judge of all the earth rescues his people mercifully. He rescues his people in his mercy.

And verse 12 now, follow along what takes place. 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're going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against his people is so great that he sent us to destroy it. And so Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law who had pledged to marry his daughters.

And he said, hurry up and get out of this place because the Lord is about to destroy the city. But his sons-in-law thought he was joking. Which is scarily very 21st century, by the way.

[13:49] Shut up with your God's going to destroy. Ooh, scary judgment's coming. Get real. With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, hurry, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you'll be swept away when the city is punished.

And 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'll be swept away. Here's the question.

Why do Lot and his family get rescued? How come they get rescued from the judgment of God? For sure, Lot didn't join in with the men of the city.

In the New Testament, he's described in 2 Peter 2, verse 7, as a righteous man who's distressed by the conduct of the lawless. At some level, Lot is following God and wants to please him.

[14:59] But why here were Lot and his family led safely out of the city? There are two reasons. First, it says at the end of verse 16, for the Lord was merciful to them.

Lot didn't earn his way out. It wasn't what God owed him. The Lord was merciful. In verse 18 onwards, Lot says, for some reason I want to flee to a small town over there.

And in verse 19, your servant has found favour in your eyes and you've shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. His life spared because of God's mercy and his loving kindness.

There's a second reason, though, why they're rescued. Look over to the end of the passage, over the page in verse 29, chapter 19, verse 29, the conclusion.

When God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham. And so he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.

[16:17] Lot is rescued because God remembered Abraham. For you see, the Lord God had made promises to Abraham and his family after him, promising to bless them and love them and

walk with them and protect them.

And Lot is the nephew of Abraham. He's saved because he's connected to Abraham. He's Abraham's family. At this point in the Old Testament, Abraham is the channel of God's blessing. Do you want to experience mercy? Do you want to be blessed by God? You've got to be connected to Abraham. And so here in Sodom, Lot and his family are rescued because God is merciful and that mercy comes through Abraham.

Now, in the New Testament and today, the Lord God is still stunningly merciful. And that mercy flows to us through Abraham's descendant, Jesus.

For Jesus now is the channel of God's mercy and rescue and blessing to the world. And so if you want to experience God's mercy and be rescued from the destroying judgment, like Lot connected to Abraham, you have got to be connected to Jesus.

[17 : 55] Put your faith in him. Become part of his family. God's people. God's people. That's why the New Testament describes Jesus as the one who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Dying for us on the cross, he bears on his shoulders the judgment and destruction we rightly deserve. In the words of Galatians chapter 1, the Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age.

And so today, it's through Jesus Christ that God rescues his people mercifully. Can you imagine back on that day in Genesis 19, can you imagine the relief for Lot and his family belonging to Abraham, grabbed and led out and spared?

They will not be swept away when the city is punished. What a kindness. What relief. What relief. Could you sense this?

For someone like you and me today, belonging to Jesus Christ and knowing God's mercy to us. Through Jesus, I've been grabbed and led out and spared and rescued through him.

[19 : 23] And I will not be swept away when the judge appears. Not because I'm good. Not because I've earned it. But because God has shown me mercy through Jesus.

The judge of all the earth, you see, he will do right. Rescuing his people mercifully and now lastly, destroying the wicked justly.

From verse 23 now, chapter 19. By the time Lot reached Zohar, the sun had risen over the land and then the Lord rained down burning sulphur on Sodom and Gomorrah from the Lord out of the heavens.

No natural disaster. This is from the Lord. Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those who lived in the cities and also the vegetation in the land.

But Lot's wife looked back and she became a pillar of salt. Early the next morning, Abraham got up and returned to the place where he'd stood before the Lord.

[20 : 36] The place where he'd said, will not the judge of all the earth do right? And he looked down towards Sodom and Gomorrah, towards all the land of the plain and he saw dense smoke rising from the land like smoke from a furnace.

Total, utter destruction. In Luke chapter 17, in the New Testament, Jesus wants the world to see the destruction of Sodom and hear a sober warning.

Luke chapter 17, verses 28 to 30 again, from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the days of Lot, people were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. It will be just like that on the future day when Jesus Christ comes in blazing fire as judge of all.

Could you believe that? Got to be joking. We went into town yesterday, lunchtime in the spring sunshine, and Cambridge felt such a relaxed and content place.

[21 : 54] We went out for lunch. Cafe tables spilling out on the pavements. There was a young Japanese woman concentrating hard, taking a photo of a college. We walked up a little street, a group of up for it 30-year-olds or so who'd maybe already had a glass of wine or two, casual and loud, and the market was in full swing by great St Mary's.

People eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. And as we walked along together, with this passage in my mind, I imagined the heavens opening there and then.

And the Lord Jesus, the judge of all, revealed, and men and women turning, and their mouths open in shock before being swept away and destroyed. Genesis 18 and 19 this morning, taken up by the Lord Jesus Christ and applied to our world today.

Hear this, the judge of all the earth will do right. He will do what's right. He will come, rescuing his people mercifully, destroying the wicked justly.

And so this morning, the so what for us, the so what for our world is so clear and so urgent for all who will listen. It's a clear and urgent warning because the day of destruction is not yet upon us.

[23 : 20] There is still time to escape. Today, now in 2022, is a God-given day of salvation when the judge of all the earth in his kindness declares to Russian presidents and British teenagers and all of us, turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth.

Today, however righteous you think you are, however wicked you know you are and feel you are, flee. Flee for your life and don't look back.

Turning your back on a life of sin and rebellion against God. I'm done with that now. You must flee from the coming judgment and run to the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham.

And don't look back. Remember Lot's wife, she looked back and became a pillar of salt. Don't spend your life pining for an old way of life, secretly wanting to live as you please.

Run to Jesus. Cast yourself on him. Put your faith in him. Lord Jesus, I come to you. I grab hold of you.

[24 : 31] Grab hold of me and save me. I pray. I need your mercy. I join your family. I am yours. Flee to Jesus, the one who gives his life for you because the Lord Jesus Christ is our only hope.

this son of Abraham through whom God mercy comes. He is a full saviour. And he and he alone wonderfully rescues us and rescues millions upon millions of people who put their faith in him from the coming wrath.

Would you flee and cast yourself on Christ and put your faith in him and hide in him? Let me lead us in a prayer.

Let's pray together. 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.

Almighty God, we bow before you this morning and confess that you are the judge of all the earth. You know what is right.

[25 : 54] You will do what is right. Some of us may have been or may be embroiled in such wickedness. Some of us blithely unaware of how our sins offend you.

Yet today you hold out salvation to your world. Thank you that in Jesus Christ there is full redemption and salvation for all who turn to him.

Thank you that you're a God of stunning mercy. Thank you that today you are adding people to your kingdom. Thank you that you have held back the day when you bring destruction on your world.

Lord, make us please. Make millions and millions across the world today, our Father, those who find refuge in Jesus Christ and rescue from the wrath to come.

We hide in him and place our faith in him this morning. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.