



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

Talk Genesis 19:15-29: The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

Lesson 41

"When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city." 16 And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. 17 So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed." 18 Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords! 19 Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. 20 See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live."

21 And he said to him, "See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. 22 Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there."

Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. 23 The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. 24 Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. 25 So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. 26 But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. 27 And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. 28 Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace. 29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt."

Background Notes

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah may have been a natural catastrophe, but if so, it was precisely timed by God to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah as an act of divine judgment. A number of miracles in the Bible were natural events, but precisely timed by God Himself. The natural event here may have been an earthquake along the geologic fault that runs the length of the Jordan Valley. In fact, this geologic rift runs all the way down through the Red Sea and on into Africa. It is one of the longest geologic faults on the earth. In any case, at the time of the earthquake, volcanic ash and combustible gases and other materials, including sulfurous brimstone, may have been spewed up out of the rift into the air and ignited, maybe even by lightening. This debris then rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah and the other wicked cities of the plain. This is one possible scenario.

Now while Lot and his two daughters escaped the catastrophe, Lot's wife looked back and lingered, and was turned into a pillar of salt (v26). She was probably thinking of her nice home and possessions and she lingered and looked back. But she disobeyed, and she became a monument to disobedience.

What does "she became a pillar of salt" mean? It doesn't necessarily mean she became a figurine of sodium chloride or table salt. If she was inundated and buried by materials falling from the sky, she would have become a pillar of various types of "salts," and maybe even been petrified later -- as were the people of Pompei after the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

There are salt deposits and ash fault deposits and combustible materials in the area of the Dead Sea where Sodom and Gomorrah were located. Along the southern shores of the Dead Sea there are great amounts of rock salt, even pillars of rock salt. There is even one pinnacle of rock that is known to locals as "Lot's wife"! Well, it's not Lot's wife, but tourists take pictures of this pinnacle of a rock, and tell the folks at home, "There's Lot's wife." Well, no! And there's more we could say here!

Have the ancient destroyed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah been found? Probably, but there is still some debate. It was formerly thought that they were buried under the southern end of the Dead Sea, but recent archeological work has just about confirmed that the location of Sodom and Gomorrah was on the southeast side of the Dead Sea.

Doctrinal Points

1. He who hesitates is lost.

That's not a verse in the Bible, but it captures a biblical truth. It's a common expression that we use for people who don't take advantage of opportunities that are given to them. We can certainly apply that statement to the matter of eternal salvation, can't we? The Bible teaches us that in order to avoid the judgment of God upon sin, we must repent of our sins and turn to Christ for salvation before it is too late. There is no other way of escape. *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'"*(John 4:6).

Acts 4:12 says, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." And John 3:36 says, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

No one is **born** a Christian. We are born under the judgment of God because of our sinful nature. We must become Christians -- and he who hesitates is lost. Lot's wife is a biblical illustration of this truth. She hesitated, and lingered, and looked back, and she was lost in the judgment. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 17:32, *"Remember Lot's wife."*

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is used throughout the Bible as an illustration of how the judgment of God against sin is certain -- and it can come suddenly. Look at verse 23: *"The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar."* It was early morning, another beautiful day in Sodom -- no one expected the catastrophe that was about to take place. *"Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens."*

Proverbs 6:15 says this about the unbeliever: *"his calamity shall come suddenly; suddenly he shall be broken without remedy."*

If you are here this morning and you are not a Christian, I urge you to receive Christ today, because he who hesitates is lost. You never know what a day will bring forth. You never know what day will be your last. In Hebrews 9:27 says, *"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."* The unbeliever who hesitates is lost.

There is a lesson here for the believer as well. Lot was a believer, and he escaped the judgment, but he lost everything. Think of all the time and energy and material possessions that Lot had invested in Sodom. It all went up in smoke. Back in chapter 14, Lot had a golden opportunity to get out of Sodom when Abraham rescued him, but he hesitated. He went back to Sodom -- he was attached to Sodom. Even when he escaped from Sodom before the catastrophe, he hesitated to go to the mountains as the angels had directed him. He continued his downward path.

What an illustration of what the Lord said in Matthew 10:39, *"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."* Lot lost his life. He selfishly made a luxurious life for himself in Sodom, but he lost his life as far as serving God goes. The same is true for believers today. He who hesitates is lost. Are you hesitating as to your commitment, as to your dedication to the Lord? Remember, he who hesitates is lost.

2. The prayers of a committed believer are effective.

James 5:16 says, *"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."* I think that we see that biblical truth illustrated here in Genesis 19. Look at verses 15 and 16: *"When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, 'Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.' 16 And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city."*

Why was the Lord merciful to Lot? Why did the Lord send the two angels to Sodom? Why did the Lord strike the men who had surrounded the house with blindness? Why did the angels drag reluctant Lot out of the city? Why? The key is found in verse 29, *"And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow."*

God remembered Abraham! Abraham, the committed believer, had been praying for his nephew Lot -- not just the intercessory prayer of chapter 18, but probably Abraham prayed for Lot every day. The prayers of the committed believer are effective.

Has God been merciful to you, and spared you from self-destruction or some other calamity? If so, mostly likely some committed Christians were praying for you. I am convinced that the prayers of my godly grandfather have had an effect on my life. I used to hear my grandfather pray, throughout the night sometimes. He'd be praying for hours, "out loud," for many things, including me. The prayers of the committed believer are effective.

Practical Application: Let's not flirt with the world.

Sodom and the Cities of the Plain are a picture of the world under judgment. Even after Lot escaped from Sodom, he wanted to move into another city of the plain, little Zoar. In verse 29, he said to the angels:

"See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live."

By the way, compare this selfish prayer of Lot to Abraham's prayers for Lot. What a difference, right? Lot wanted to continue to have one foot in this world. He is just like many Christians today, who are not living in Sodom, but in Zoar, "just a little city." Not 100% worldly, but not a fully committed Christian either. Just flirting with the world.

The Lord Jesus said in John 17 that we are to be **in** the world, but not **of** the world. Lot's problem was that he was not only in the world; he was also **of** the world. He compromised with the world! I John 2:15-17 says: *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."*

Let's live what we believe! Let's not flirt with the world.