

**“You Can Take the Boy Out of Sodom...”**  
**Genesis 19:23-38**  
**September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

Pyrophobia...the fear of fire. Especially the last 4 ½ years I’ve had the privilege of serving with the Aledo Volunteer Fire Department. During that time, I have seen the destructiveness of fire up close. A healthy respect for fire and what it can do is necessary to properly fight it.

This is from a woman named Kay on the website Fearof.net:

“I am super terrified of fires. I can only have one thing plugged in an outlet. I’m always checking outlets and the stove. I cannot relax because I am always terrified. And when I see smoke even from a candle, my heart feels like it jumps out of my chest and I can’t breathe. My heart races a lot when I am near a controlled fire, like a stove. Also my house is barely lit because I am afraid of plugging lamps in. I need help, but I don’t want to sound crazy.”

Fire has many good uses, among them providing warmth and light, sterilization and cooking. But, fire can also be used to represent judgment, another reason to fear it.

We return this morning to pick up our study in the Bible’s first book - Genesis - where we left off two weeks ago. Then, we looked at the first 22 verses of Genesis chapter 19. This chapter is not the most uplifting part of God’s Word – it’s not probably the first part of the Holy Bible that comes to mind when you want to encourage someone who’s struggling. Yet, I would submit, it is a place in the Bible we can turn to find God’s grace.

The chapter opens with two angels coming to Sodom to warn Lot and his family that God would destroy the city since its great sins had moved God to do so. Lot invites the two angels to stay at his home, and while there, a mob of depraved men surround the house because they wanted to abuse Lot’s guests. Lot goes outside to persuade the men not to act wickedly, but they turn their attention to Lot instead. The angels bring Lot back into the house, striking the men of Sodom with blindness.

With urgency, the angels direct Lot to gather his family and get out of the city because the time of its destruction was near. Lot tried to convince his sons-in-law to leave, but they dismissed him because they thought he was joking. As morning dawned, the angels command Lot to get his wife and two daughters and leave the city, or they’d be killed in the destruction of the city. Lot delayed, and the angels grabbed the foursome and took them outside the city.

There, the angels stressed they run for the hills, and not look back, or stop anywhere as they fled. The destruction of the city wouldn’t take place until Lot arrived in a city called Zoar. That brings us to the passage before us today – **Genesis 19:23-38**.

**Genesis 19:23-38:**

“The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. <sup>24</sup>Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. <sup>25</sup>So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

<sup>26</sup>But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

<sup>27</sup> And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. <sup>28</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>30</sup> Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave. <sup>31</sup> Now the firstborn said to the younger, “Our father *is* old, and *there is* no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth. <sup>32</sup> Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.” <sup>33</sup> So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

<sup>34</sup> It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, “Indeed I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in *and* lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.” <sup>35</sup> Then they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

<sup>36</sup> Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. <sup>37</sup> The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he *is* the father of the Moabites to this day. <sup>38</sup> And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he *is* the father of the people of Ammon to this day.

With Lot arriving at the city of Zoar, the **sky falls on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah**. Verse 23 tells us **when** the destruction happened – when Lot reached the safety of the city of Zoar. Further, it was the morning, as “the sun had risen upon the earth.” *Red sky at morning, sailor take warning?*” It was too late to heed the warning for, as Chicken Little would put it, the sky was about to fall.

Verse 24 describes the destruction – “the LORD rained brimstone (sulfur) and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah,” One commentator calls this “molten rain.” (Hughes, 269) It was as if the sky opened up, and hot lava was poured all over the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The destruction was incredible. Verse 25 describes the extent (**the what**) of the destruction – the cities and plain were overthrown, everything living died, to include the plant life. It was total and complete devastation; a wasteland.

Lest we think God didn’t have anything to do with this destruction, verse 24 tells us twice, that it was the LORD **Who** brought the destruction on Sodom and Gomorrah. The LORD rained the destruction on the cities, from the LORD out of the heavens! Truly, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (**Hebrews 10:31**) God destroyed a wicked and sinful people.

Jump ahead with me to what takes place in verses 30-38. After the destruction rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah, we see three people (Lot and his daughters) coming up out of hiding in Zoar. From all evidence they could gather, the entire world had been destroyed, much like it was during the Great Flood of Noah’s day.

*Why did they leave Zoar?* Fear, according to verse 30, they were afraid to stay in Zoar. And, evidently, Lot’s daughters were afraid they were the last three humans on earth given the devastation they witnessed. Fear, as we noticed in the introduction of this message, can cause people to do desperate things.

Many commentaries on the Book of Genesis do not cover **Genesis 19:30-38**. The passage is uncomfortable, it's depraved, and it's hard to understand how the New Testament can identify Lot as a righteous man given all the stuff he was involved in, chief among them the last 9 verses of chapter 19.

God spared Sodom and Gomorrah as long as Lot, his wife, and their daughters were still residing there. Further, God also spared Zoar from destruction since Lot and his daughters went there to escape judgment on Sodom.

None of these four people were examples you'd want your children to follow. Perhaps the great lesson we are to take from the example of Lot, his wife, and their incestuous daughters is illustrated in the title of this message – “You Can Take the Boy Out of Sodom, but...” *What's the rest? You Can't Take the Sodom Out of the Boy.*”

*What happened to Lot's wife?* Tucked in the midst of this teaching is verse 26, we read referring to Lot's wife, “But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.” Back in verse 17, the angels told Lot and his family, “Do not look behind you...let you be destroyed.” Lot's nameless wife couldn't resist the backward glance – she became a pillar of salt – instant monument! Yet, it was more than a mere glance that took her down – it was longing for the life she had known in Sodom. Her heart was apparently in Sodom.

Sodom may have been the Las Vegas of its day – lights, glitz, sensual entertainment, depravity, alcohol flowing to excess, sexual immorality – the kind of things that lead rise to the saying, “What goes on in Vegas, stays in Vegas.” *Maybe it was her possessions that caused Mrs. Lot to linger? Perhaps it was her reputation, or a relationship, or a particular lust, or some other comfort?*

In the New Testament, Jesus refers back to this incident when He was speaking with His disciples. We read in **Luke 17:32-33** – “Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.” Mrs. Lot couldn't season her life properly, so she became a preservative – salt. And, the kind of salt that lost its flavor.

Similarly, Lot's daughters are not named. After this incident, they disappear from the biblical record. Their thinking and actions do not accord with biblical teaching in pursuing children with their father. But, we must consider the environment they were exposed to. They had been raised in Sodom, exposed to all the wicked and vile practices of that society. They had been engaged to marry Sodomites. They were apparently absorbed into the local culture; they were Sodomites to the core. “Even after the destruction of Sodom, the mentality of Sodom remained.” (Ross, 363)

There's surely much application here for us, parents and grandparents. *How are you raising your children? Do you raise them in the church, or do you give them the choice? Are your children surrounded by a church family, or are you tossing them to the cultural winds?*

A couple of years ago, I asked a woman (not a member of the church) if her son would be coming to “Bible Bunch.” She said she’d have to ask him. I responded, “That’s not his decision to make; it’s yours.”

In like manner, far too many parents leave it up to their pre-teen or teenage children to decide if they’ll be attending worship or participating in the ministries of the church. And, then, they wonder, why they have difficulties with their children while they’re still living at home. Then, years later, they notice their children aren’t walking with the Lord. The spirit of Sodom was allowed to reign in those homes!

Let us think more soberly **why** this destruction took place in Sodom. Sodom and Gomorrah are listed among the most frequent Bible illustrations of judgment. They are mentioned as examples of judgment no less than 22 times in the Bible! As we’ve seen in our study thus far, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were sexually perverted, they were oppressive of the poor and downtrodden, and they were violent lovers of themselves and their own lusts.

*Is it not sobering to think that this could be* (I didn’t say that it “was,” I merely said, “could be”) *why our country was struck by Islamic terrorists 15 years ago today? Was not the America of September 2001 a place where depravity flourished?* It’s even more disturbing to think that we haven’t learned a thing from that dreadful day of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001! How long was it after the destruction of that terrible day that things went right back to the way they were?

Friends, dark passages of sacred Scripture like Genesis Chapter 19 are intended to get our attention. I don’t like to spend lots of time dwelling about the depravity we may delight in behind closed doors or we have codified in the laws of our land. *Is America a better place than it was on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001? Are we a better people because of what took place at the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, DC, or the wilderness of Shanksville, Pennsylvania 15 years ago today?* A compelling argument can be made that we are no better at all, and, in fact, things have gotten much worse.

But, friends, there is hope, even as there was hope in the midst of this incident. In verse 29, we see in the midst of all the destruction at Sodom, God remembered Abraham. Abraham surveyed the still smoldering ruins of Sodom, and God remember him, the promises that he made to Abraham and to his posterity. Where sinful men and women are prone to forgetfulness, God remembers!

So, we must turn away from Sodom and look instead to Calvary. Calvary is also a scene of judgement. But Calvary is a scene of great mercy and a proof of God’s love. When Jesus died on the cross at Calvary, it was in your place. Jesus suffered, but it was to bear the just punishment of your sins. This is the hope we have even as we remember very difficult days like 9-11.

‘The Second Coming’ from *The Valley of Vision*

O SON OF GOD AND SON OF MAN,

Thou wast incarnate, didst suffer, rise, ascend  
for my sake;  
Thy departure was not a token of separation  
but a pledge of return;  
Thy Word, promises, sacraments, show thy death  
until thou come again.  
That day is no horror to me,  
for thy death has redeemed me,  
thy Spirit fills me,  
thy love animates me,  
thy Word governs me.  
I have trusted thee and thou hast not betrayed  
my trust;  
waited for thee, and not waited in vain.  
Thou wilt come to raise my body from the dust,  
and re-unite it to my soul,  
by a wonderful work of infinite power and love,  
greater than that which bounds the oceans' waters,  
ebbs and flows the tides,  
keeps the stars in their courses,  
and gives life to all creatures.  
This corruptible shall put on incorruption,  
this mortal, immortality,  
this natural body, a spiritual body,  
this dishonoured body, a glorious body,  
this weak body, a body of power.  
I triumph now in thy promises as I shall do  
in their performance,  
for the head cannot live if the members are dead;  
Beyond the grave is resurrection, judgment,  
acquittal, dominion.  
Every event and circumstance of my life will be  
dealt with —  
the sins of my youth, my secret sins,  
the sins of abusing thee, of disobeying thy Word,  
the sins of neglecting ministers' admonitions,  
the sins of violating my conscience —  
all will be judged;  
And after judgment, peace and rest, life and service,  
employment and enjoyment, for thine elect.  
O God, keep me in this faith,  
and ever looking for Christ's return.