

Series: "Genesis: The Beginning Continued"

Sermon: "Getting Sodom Out"

Text: Genesis 19

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- Last week, we left Abraham heading home from a meeting with the LORD. Abraham now knows that Sodom and Gomorrah will be judged by God and that God will judge righteously based on truth.
- Can Abraham save Lot and his family now living in Sodom? He has tried by interceding with God for the righteous in an indirect way so that God will not treat the righteous as he treats the wicked.
- Abraham's desire to save Lot turns out to be complicated. Sometimes, no matter how much one might wish and even pray otherwise, the corruption caused by compromise cannot easily be reversed.
- Chapter 19 is, in the beginning, a chapter recording temporal judgment on unrighteous people who had collectively spiraled downward to a great depth in their sinful choice to live life autonomously—that is to live life without God and without regard for his created purpose for humans.
- Then, later in the chapter, shows how deeply even the righteous can be influenced when they join the unrighteous in compromised, autonomous living.
- We sing a song with the line "*I need thee every hour.*" The reality is, "*I need thee every moment of every day!*" When I forget that, there can be lasting negative consequences.
- Let me start with 2 theological reminders...
- *Theological point #1:* We have been watching Abram become Abraham. That name change is a signal to us of a progression in the promises of God to this man and his offspring, the Israelites. In shorthand, the promises touch on a "**seed**"—a "**land**"—and "**blessings.**"

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- By this point in the story, Moses has shown his Israelite readers who are about to enter the Promised Land and possess it that the "**seed**" promises shape the future of not just a man and his family but a whole nation that will be born to fulfill God's created purpose for humans. The seed promise is, at once, both very small pointing to the coming of the singular Messiah and very large—incorporating all of the Israelites as a people of God in this calling of the promises.
- The "**land**" promise that begins with a place for Abram to pitch his tents grows as well into a land where an entire nation can dwell in a way that shows the nations of the world what it is like to **image** the Creator God as humans were designed to do.
- The "**blessing**" promises grow as well in more than a single direction. These will not simply be blessings to Abraham so that he can be God's man but also blessings to a whole people so they can be God's people and be blessed in order to bless each other and then bless whole the world of nations.
- In other words, Israel will not exist—and will not be blessed for its own sake but for the sake of a whole world God is redeeming.
- Sound familiar? What do we say? "FBC—Jesus Church—does not exist for its own sake but for the sake of a world God loves and is redeeming."
- The nature of this calling—this *purpose* as a people back then and then us as a people, now is supposed to make a difference in why we do what we do as a church. It should impact every decision we make as a church going forward. We are not here for our own sake—our own comfort—our own religious activity. We are here to be God's agents in his redemptive plan even when that means sacrifice.
- Moses is building that purpose for Israel as he moves his readers through *Genesis*. Each story he tells, by the leading of the Spirit, has

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something to say in connection with that bigger (and smaller) purpose. Even *Genesis 19*, today.

- I say "even *Genesis 19*" because this chapter is again highly sexualized from our perspective. It is focused on reproducing the seed that will fulfill God's promises from Moses' perspective.
- *So, Theological point #2:* In each of these reproductive contexts, there is a temptation to see God's relationship with humans as mainly focused on producing moral behaviors—a temptation to see that as the focus here in *Genesis 19*.
- Some would say that God hates the sex acts of Sodom and Lot's daughters so the lesson of chapter 19 is simply **behave** differently, here, sexually than they behaved.
- I have consistently taught that Moses is writing about something bigger than *behaviors*. These behaviors matter and they are sinful. However, the behaviors are a secondary result of a broken relationship with God, his promises and his purpose for humans.
- We know we can legislate behaviors—i.e., legislate morality—and, for a time, we might see a decrease in visible sin. What we don't see is the inevitable increase of sinfulness in human hearts that will then explode and spread into a world of unrighteousness.
- God changes autonomous humans from the inside out into REAL altar- building, worshipping **priests** of the LORD. God is not interested in temporary appearances of external righteousness. He is not interested in outward religious appearances.
- This has always been true in the lives of all the antediluvian characters, in Abraham, in the Covenants, in the Law of Moses and, in what we think of as the Gospel and the church of Jesus Christ.
- The practice of homosexuality is a sin. It is unrighteous. I think it is impossible to suggest otherwise from Scripture. Incest is also a sin.

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The parameters for what the Bible defines as incest are different than those set in our culture however, getting your dad drunk so that he will get you pregnant is not a gray area biblically.

- God certainly hates these sinful acts because they are harmful to the humans he loves. But he hates them as well because they do not promote His LIFE in humans—his plan. They promote death.
- But there is a bigger story than sinful acts. When you have time, read *Romans 1:18-32* in this light. There, Paul describes what I have called ***a spiral of depravity***. It is a downward spiral of dying that spins more and more out of control as humans chose autonomy—i.e., chose to live life without God.
- The spiral applies to individuals and it applies to whole cultures that deny God and refuse to trust Him.
- When you read the second half of *Romans 1* you will see that as this *spiral* is more and more out of control and closer and closer to death the observable evidence in individuals and cultures is very often a greater and greater perversion of the sexual reproductive role in fulfilling the plan of God for humans. Both women and men as they reject God and his plan, Paul says, *"abandon 'natural relations'—the sexual relations God has designed for his purposes—reject them for what he calls indecent—unnatural ones and as a result, they receive in themselves the due penalty for their perversion--death."*
- Perverted sexuality is a sign of nearing the bottom end of the death spiral for autonomous humans. There is really only one more step downward Paul reveals. That step is that these autonomous livers are no longer satisfied with just living their own lives without God, they also begin to seek validation for their death choices by making others accept their autonomy and live autonomously with them.

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- In other words, they become *flaming evangelists* of—death--of life lived without God! Rather than hiding their God-rejection and its consequent behaviors, they openly promote it. Do we see much of this *flagrancy* today in our culture??!! Do we see whole segments of society evangelizing for perverted purposes??? (Yes)
- So now, on to the text for today with these theological ideas—patterns—in mind. 1st, Abraham and Lot as part of the **righteous** seed are meant to impact people for God's ways in the world. Yes, Peter in 2 Peter 2:7 (BTW: that whole context is a good one to read to expand your thinking on this chapter 19) Peter calls Lot a "**righteous man.**" He was a very unhappy "*righteous*" man but he was part of the righteous family and then the nation that was meant to bless the world turning the world back to faith in God.
- Then, 2nd, when righteous people get closely involved with living with the unrighteous, there are often long-term consequences from the compromises they will make. And yes, although the point of the story is not simply sexual morality, when the righteous compromise with the unrighteous, the result will often show up in forms of sexual immorality.
- Let's read the chapter with just a few comments along the way.

READ Genesis 19:1-36

19 ¹The 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. ² "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."

³ 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.

- Righteous Lot acts as righteous Abraham had when he recognized the visitors—but, righteous Lot, unlike Abraham, has compromised with unrighteous people. He has joined in life with God-rejectors.
- He looked toward the city a few chapters ago and now he is living *in* the city. In fact, he is "*sitting in its gates.*" At the minimum, he is seen as *one of them* rather than as an evangelist for the LORD of his righteousness and a different faith. And it is possible being "*in the gates*" means he is sitting where the judges of the city sit. He then has become a leader in a city that lives without any need for God.
- Just how bad *are* Sodom's indicators of spiraling downward from God's LIFE to death? Look at verse 4 and following

⁴ Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. ⁵ 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."

⁶ Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him ⁷ and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. ⁸ 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."

⁹ "Get out of our way," they replied. And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, 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.

- Pretty bad, I would say. God says so as well as he has Moses include these sordid details in his Word.
- All the men of Sodom are looking for something new sexually. They have tired of the perversions they have invented for themselves.

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- Has the righteous Lot compromised to live there with them? It seems so to me given what he is willing to do with his virgin daughters. He has no sense of a need to protect the righteous seed for God's plan. Of course, righteous Abraham endangered that seed as well when he lied about Sarah.
- Notice when compromised, Lot does stand up to the unrighteous with whom he has compromised, he is now an **alien**—an outsider who doesn't belong. By this time, compromise means that Lot has no influence for righteousness with them whatsoever.
- He can't even save himself from their attacks. Look at verses 10 and 11

¹⁰ But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. ¹¹ 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.

- Now, the LORD's angels take over to deliver the compromised righteous man from the judgement that he has been swept into because of his compromises. Look at verse 12

¹² 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, ¹³ 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."

¹⁴ 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.

- What a sense of utter failure must have struck the righteous Lot who was meant to bless people like the Sodomites with the LIFE of God. His own future sons-in-law said, "**you must be joking!**" They think the potential threat of judgment for living life autonomously is a

joke—it is not going to happen! Lot has lost all influence and can't even bless them with the truth for deliverance.

- With judgment imminent and the real danger of a righteous man being caught up in this temporal judgment of God, consider the powerful, lasting, negative influence, that the compromise still has on Lot and his family. Look at verse 15 and following.
- It seems trite to say it but it is clearly true: ***"You can get righteous Lot and his family out of Sodom but you can't get the unrighteous influence of Sodom out of Lot and his family"***

¹⁵ 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."

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ As soon as they had 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!"

¹⁸ But Lot said to them, "No, my lords, please! ¹⁹ Your servant has found favor in your eyes, and you have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can't flee to the mountains; this disaster will overtake me, and I'll die. ²⁰ Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small. Let me flee to it—it is very small, isn't it? Then my life will be spared."

²¹ He said to him, "Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of. ²² But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it." (That is why the town was called Zoar.)

²³ By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. ²⁴ Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—

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from the LORD out of the heavens. ²⁵ Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land. ²⁶ But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

²⁷ Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the LORD. ²⁸ He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.

²⁹ 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.

- Even Lot hesitates and has to be pulled by the hand to leave the unrighteous place and people that have become *home and homies*.
- Later in biblical revelation, we learn about the nature of the flesh and how the world, the flesh and the devil can become such an enslaving force in the lives of the righteous if we allow that.
- I again refer you to Paul's letter to the *Romans*. Much of that letter is written about how to be *saved* but not from hell rather from the enslaving powers of sin and death over our flesh.
- If God's people in Moses day were going to be a blessing of righteous life from God to the world, they needed to see what compromise with the world's godless way would do to that mission.
- After the angel messengers of the LORD have dragged out Lot, his wife and his daughters, they return to be the instruments of God's righteous judgement. Now Lot and the women, who have been graciously spared, must choose to run away from their compromise as fast as they can without any angels dragging them.
- The geography is interesting. Lot thinks he knows their physical travel limits and asks for and gets a hiding place in Zoar. Zoar is still close enough to be able to see Sodom. Zoar is still close enough that when they reach it before the destruction begins, Lot's wife loses

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what little trust she has in the message and looks back toward her home and homies.

- The wording may suggest more than just a mere a glance. It might even have been that she, like the sons-in-law, decided this was all an unbelievable **joke**. *She* was going to return to her life back there in Sodom without God.
- However, God did what he said he would do and righteously judged these cities of people who were spreading unrighteousness and death instead of spreading the Name of the LORD in all the earth.
- AND, any righteous who, compromise, were caught up in that unrighteousness rather than being the **blessing** of God's truth to the world—they also would be caught up in that judgment.
- At the very least they were scarred by their compromise and the by witnessing the just judgement of God.
- But, notice verse 29 again please...
²⁹ 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.
- Abraham's bargaining with the LORD for even the compromised righteous was not forgotten. If Abraham hadn't been able to convince Lot to trust the LORD and resist the influence of the autonomous unbelievers surrounding them, at least he was now able to intercede for Lot.
- Sadly, sometimes when we are to bless those we love with the truth about God and righteous LIFE, they will still reject it. But we can still intercede on their behalf with God.
- Now that Lot and his daughters are out of Sodom and have escaped the judgment of the unrighteous how will they fare? Can you "*get the Sodom out*" of them? Look at verse 30 and following please.

³⁰ 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. ³¹ One day the older daughter said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man around here to lie with us, as is the custom all over the earth. ³² Let's get our father to drink wine and then lie with him and preserve our family line through our father."

³³ That night they got their father to drink wine, and the older daughter went in and lay with him. He was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.

³⁴ The next day the older daughter said to the younger, "Last night I lay with my father. Let's get him to drink wine again tonight, and you go in and lie with him so we can preserve our family line through our father." ³⁵ So they got their father to drink wine that night also, and the younger daughter went and lay with him. Again he was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.

³⁶ So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. ³⁷ The older daughter had a son, and she named him Moab; he is the father of the Moabites of today. ³⁸ The younger daughter also had a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the Ammonites of today.

- There is a great deal of "*knowing*" and "*not knowing*" in this chapter that culminates here. Lot's daughters, who had not *known* men, now *know* their father without him *knowing* they are *knowing* him.
- What did that serpent tell Eve? God *knows* that if you eat from the tree of *knowing* good and evil you'll *know* like he *knows* and he doesn't want you to be *knowing* like he *knows*.
- If the message isn't clear enough that humans don't *know* and can't *know* like God *knows*, Moses leaves us with a perfect example.
- As far as the daughters of Lot *know*, their whole world has been destroyed. There think they *know* that there are no more living men other than their father to carry on their family line.

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- So, like Abram with Hagar when he thought he *knew* what he needed to *know* in order to fix things, these daughters are going to fix things at least fix things as defined by their limited knowing abilities.
- The clinging idea that humans can know enough to fix things—that is, to make our lives work—is always a remnant of the righteous compromising with unrighteousness.
- And, as always, here, it makes a mess. With the Hagar incident, it created division in a family that continues to this day.
- Here it produces two tribes of humans the *Moabites* and the *Ammonites* that will cause perpetual problems for God's people and his plan to bless the nations through them.
- Perhaps the most devastating of these problems will be that the Moabites and the Ammonites, being relatively close relatives to the Israelites, will always offer a tricky, *under the radar*, temptation to compromise with the world. Sometimes they will act like friends—other times like enemies. The Israelites will often find themselves compromising by worshipping the gods of their neighbors the Moabites and the Ammonites.
- So that is my Sunday morning version of *Genesis* 19. Are the sexual activities of Sodom and the daughters sinful? Yes they are! Are they the main point? I think not.
- They are visible indicators of people who have said, "we will do life as we choose without God" and the resultant life spiraling out of control into death. But even this is likely not the main point.
- Moses' lesson is the sad outcomes when the righteous compromise. What happens when those called to be a blessing of righteousness and LIFE from the LORD compromise with unrighteousness?

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- When the righteous compromise and live as if they are in control and autonomous from God they may find a surface level acceptance from the unrighteous but that acceptance by compromise will cost them the influence that is their very reason for existing as a people of God.
- And, when the righteous live within the compromises of the unrighteous, maybe because they are comfortable, safe, or just because they work, they may well be swept up in the judgments of God.
- Paul introduced that downward ***spiral of depravity*** in *Romans 1* with these words, "***The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth...***" What is the truth they suppress? God is God and humans need him for LIFE and purpose.
- When righteous people align themselves, to any degree, with that suppression, they are setting themselves up in the sights of God's wrath that Paul wants them to escape.
- Another sad outcome when the righteous compromise with the unrighteous to live among them—to sit in their gates. When we do this, the impact of that compromise on us may be so powerful—on our flesh that is—that we keep turning back "*to look at Sodom.*" When we compromise with unrighteousness, we may create a monster in our flesh that will attack us until the day we die.
- God can do marvelous and gracious things. He can save us from judgment. But, God may never remove the influence of our compromises as long as we live. Our choices for righteousness or unrighteousness do matter. Our choices to trust God or trust ourselves to live, do matter.

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- Then, finally, if we know a compromised, righteous Lot who is stuck in Sodom or has Sodom stuck in them, should we give up? No, like Abraham, our role as bearers of the blessings of God makes us intercessors for the Lots in our lives.
- As Peter quotes from the OT, the LORD tells his people, "***Be holy because I am holy.***"
- Abraham and Israel will not be able to fulfill their mission to bless the world if they compromise with the world.
- They will not be able to fulfill God's purposes without God.
- Neither will we!