



## “Sodom & Gomorrah” 2014 (Genesis 18:1-19:38)

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### Genesis 18

v.3 Though not inspired by this verse, nevertheless every time I read it I think of a hymn entitled “Pass Me Not” by Fanny Crosby...

v.8b This is still customary in many countries of the East. When we were in India, our host would never sit and eat with us.

v.15 God knows the truth, so don't try and deny it!

v.17 Fascinating! The Hebrew word is “Yehovah,” so this is God appearing to Abraham in the form of a man, and the other two angels are in human form as well.

v.20-21 Mysterious verse because God knows everything. Where is the outcry from? Was someone praying about Sodom.? See Rev. “How long before you judge the wicked? Could it be that Lot was praying? See II Peter 2:7-8.

vv.22-33 This is very interesting, because it tells us that a group of believers in a godless community has a godly influence that may prevent God's wrath as a result of their presence.

### GENESIS 19

v.1a When Lot arrived in Sodom, he was a rich man. Now he is not only prosperous materially, but politically as well. How do we know this? Because the elders of the city sat at the gate of the city. Lot is a “leader” in Sodom! Why did he not take more of a stand against the wickedness of Sodom? A better question is, “Why was he living there?” As I mentioned when we studied Genesis chapter 13, I believe it's likely that Lot met his wife in Sodom, and it was that relationship that led him to leave his tent life and move to Sodom. But whatever it was that led him there, I am convinced it was a compromising decision and one that would cause him a lot of trouble and heartache.

v.2b It is pretty bad when even angels will not willingly accept an invitation into your home! It is also interesting that the Lord himself does not come to see Lot. He came to see Abraham. Note: When the relationship is not what it should be, sometimes one simply sends a

messenger instead. But again, even the messengers here do not initially accept Lot's invitation of hospitality! See Rev.3:14-20.

v.5 What was the sin of Sodom? Ezek.16: 49 "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. Homosexuality was only a by-product of the sin of Sodom.

v.8 For the life of me, I cannot understand how anyone could make such an offer. I am especially baffled because we know that Lot is a believer. I understand that the culture dictated that you are responsible for the guests under your roof, but this goes way too far. Something else is going on here. It appears to me that Lot is seeking to appease the wicked crowd without losing his standing in Sodom. Remember, he is a leader in Sodom! That tells me how much his position in Sodom means to him. Oh I understand that Peter tells us he was distressed by the sin of Sodom. And yet he probably loved the comfort of Sodom. And as I've already mentioned, he loved his wife, and we'll soon learn that she loved Sodom. So here he is willing to sacrifice the protection and purity of his daughters for the sake of satisfying these Sodomites!

v.9 This lets us know how much Sodom really cares for us. Sodom will not come against you until you begin to take a stand against its wicked ways. And even a compromising stand is met with threats that reveal their true character.

v.10 Saved by grace!

v.14 Lot has been a great influence on his sons-in-law hasn't he? Had he ever spoken to them about his faith, his God, the flood of Noah's day?

v.16a This is very revealing. Lot himself was hesitant to leave Sodom!

- \* Some teach that lukewarm believers will not be raptured but will go through the Great Tribulation. I do not believe this is biblical.

- \* I Cor.3: 12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

vv.18-19 At this point, if I were one of these angels, I would have laid an angelic uppercut right on Lot's chin!!

v.20 This dude is out of shape! He has had the easy life in Sodom for too long now!!

- \* Remember Ezek.16: She and her daughters were arrogant, **overfed**...

- \* Matt.24: 15 "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand--16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let no one on the roof of his

house go down to take anything out of the house. 18 Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. 19 How dreadful it will be in those days for **pregnant women** and **nursing mothers!**

vv.21-22 How gracious God is to Lot!

v.26 What made her look back?

1. Her heart was in Sodom.

\* I John 2: 15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

\* Once again, Lot's wife may have grown up in Sodom. It seems she had never experienced the faith of her husband (and that of her husband's uncle Abraham). ***She did not know the hope of another city with foundations, whose builder and maker is God.***

\* What would you be disappointed to leave behind? (Only one thing for me – my family!)

2. She did not believe God.

\* Her looking back reveals her lack of faith.

\* See Luke 17:26-33.

v.29 He remembered Abraham? This is an interesting statement. Our prayers for wayward believers does make a difference.

vv.30-38 I believe this is certainly a result of their upbringing in Sodom and their compromising father (still compromising even now!).

## IMPORTANT LESSONS

1. Compromising believers bring great harm on themselves and their families, as well as at times the family of God.

- Lot is a true believer. We know this from II Peter 2: 6-8. But Lot was a compromising believer. He compromised his faith, he is no longer a tent dweller, he has settled down in Sodom. Lot prospered in Sodom. He was already a wealthy man when he came to Sodom, and he became politically prosperous as a citizen of Sodom. He knows he will one day come to the city whose builder and maker is God, yet he is enjoying the comforts of Sodom too much to really long for (and live for) that future home. He has compromised in marriage – he married a woman who was so attached to Sodom that she looked back while escaping God's wrath upon the city, revealing the true condition of her heart. As a result

God judged her on the spot! Lot compromised his family – his daughters are committed to marry men from Sodom. And he compromised his convictions by not

standing boldly for truth and righteousness, attempting to appease an ungodly crowd seeking to “sodomize” the men at his house, who just happened to be angels! Lot lost his testimony, his wife, his sons-in-law, and his wealth. He went into Sodom rich but left with just the clothes on his back. And even after narrowly escaping the wrath of God, he ended up bearing seed through incestuous relationships with his daughters that would produce enemies of the people of Israel.

2. The Lord will not allow even one righteous person to be judged along with the wicked, even if that believer is a compromiser (See I Cor.3:12-15).

- At the rapture of the church, all Christians will be raptured (See I Thess.5:3, 8-9). There is a teaching circulating that says lukewarm Christians will not be raptured.

3. The judge of all the earth will always do what is right, especially in judgment (See Rev.16:4-7).

4. There will be a future judgment and punishment for all who have not been made righteous by faith.

- II Peter 2:6; Jude 1:7

- Even 30, 40 and 50-years ago years ago, sermons that addressed the consequences of dying apart from Christ were commonly heard. Most Americans don't believe in Hell. The latest research from Barna Associates shows that only 31 percent of adults see Hell as "a place of physical torment where people may be sent." Even among Christians, there appears to be some confusion about Hell and who goes there when they die. But why is that? Some say it is because the church has been ominously silent about the subject. Stroll the streets of America today and you will find that eternal destiny is not a subject most people even want to talk about. And when they do, their thoughts on the matter are quite diverse. CBN News asked one man, "Do you believe there is a place called Hell?" He replied, "Yes, sir. My belief in Christianity has taught me that." We asked another man, "Do you believe that all people, when they die, would go to heaven?" After taking a moment to think it over, he said, "Hmmm, good question. Yes." One woman responded, "I don't know, I think it would have to be something very, very, extremely bad to go to Hell." Another man said, "Honest belief? This is Hell. We are in Hell now. It has to be better in the next life." That confusion does not surprise the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and he lays the blame squarely on the church. Dr. Paige Patterson said, "You can traverse the entire United States on any given Sunday morning, and you very probably will not hear a sermon on the judgment of God or eternal punishment." Patterson added, "Evangelicals have voted by the silence of their voices that they either do not believe in [the doctrine of Hell] or else no longer have the courage and conviction to stand and say anything about it." Author and theologian R.C. Sproul is even more direct. "I think what we face in the church today is a virtual eclipse of the

character of God," he said. The irony is that evangelicals consider one sermon about God's judgment to be among the greatest evangelistic messages ever preached. It was delivered by Jonathan Edwards in 1741 during the height of the Great Awakening. The title: "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Edwards proclaimed, "O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: 'tis a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in Hell." Why don't preachers preach like this today? Sproul said, "I can't think of anything more politically incorrect to preach in 21st century America than the wrath of God, or the justice of God, or the doctrine of Hell." Even 30, 40 and 50-years ago years ago, sermons that addressed the consequences of dying apart from Christ were commonly heard. But in recent years, many evangelical pastors have bristled at the thought of being labeled a "fire and brimstone" preacher, and turned to a kinder, gentler approach. "I don't think fear, as a tactic, really moves people toward faith these days. So, tactically, I think there are better ways to interest the uninterested in the claims of Jesus Christ," said Pastor Bill Hybels who is considered to be the leader of the "seeker friendly" church movement. Hybels' Willow Creek Community Church outside Chicago has drawn thousands over the years and generated hundreds of similar churches. One of them is Spring Branch Community Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The church's website declares that one of the reasons people don't like church is that "pastors make people feel ignorant and guilty." Spring Branch Pastor Michael Simone said, "How do they make people feel guilty? I think pastors can sometimes do that very inadvertently by saying, 'You don't do this,' or 'You're doing this and this behavior is against everything that is in the Bible.'" Simone believes the people who come to his church want to know how improve their lives and their marriages. He has even done a sermon called, "Sex and the City." He says preaching a sermon like "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" wouldn't work today, when most Americans seemingly have it all. "Today, I think the title of that sermon would be, 'I Went on Vacation and Felt Empty Inside,'" Simone said. Hybels points out that Jesus did not use the same evangelistic approach with everyone he met. "When He was with the woman at the well, He just started talking about water. He didn't start talking about Hell, He started talking about water. When He was with the rich, young ruler he talked about money. When He was with Nicodemus, he talked about matters of the Law. He always knew how to establish rapport first, and guide them into a discussion that would lead to the unfolding of the truth. We must do the same," Hybels said. Critics agree, but they add that the discussion at some point must include the truth about the eternal destiny of those who reject the gospel. Sproul said, "The power of the Gospel is the Word of God. It's not these methods and techniques whereby we hide the Gospel. But there's no need of a Gospel...nobody needs a Gospel if there's no judgment, if there's no law, if God is not a God of judgment. If there's no such thing as Hell, what good is the Gospel? The Gospel tells us that we're saved from the wrath that is to come." Hybels said, "Are we responsible for teaching the whole message of the Gospel of Christ? Absolutely. Anybody who doesn't, I think the Scriptures are clear, will stand accountable before God someday." But even Hybels admits the subject of God's divine wrath is not preached from evangelical pulpits like it once was. So how can pastors deliver what is referred to as "the whole counsel of God" without being offensive? "If you are their pastor, not just

their preacher, but their pastor, and they know that you're for them, then it's amazing how many of these hard sayings they're willing to listen to," Sproul said. "I mean, we're not supposed to add offense to the Gospel. But if we try to take out the offense that is already there, then we're offending God, and we're offending Christ, and we're not proclaiming the whole counsel of God."

- Found this on web: So my theology has gone through a multitude of changes over the years, mostly because the experiences of my life have led me to a single conclusion which many standard notions of God don't actually allow for: God is love. It says this in the Bible, sure, but it also says lots of things about Hell in the Bible, too. Does an all-loving God and Hell mix? Sure, say theologians, God is a just God, he punishes the unjust for eternity and all who go to Hell deserve it. But here's the thing: No one deserves to go to Hell. Nobody. Not mass murderers, not rapists, not child abusers, not anyone. There is no crime which deserves an eternity of punishment, and no human being so totally devoid of all worth that their time in eternity would be best spent in ceaseless agony/fire/loneliness/separation/darkness/whatever Hell is supposed to be. Exactly why would a crime within a relative nanosecond of the universe's lifespan warrant horrific punishment for longer than the life of the universe itself? And even, somehow, if there was a crime that warranted such a punishment, love would forgive it. Love forgives everything. If harm is done lazily, because it knows it will be forgiven, love waits patiently for the harmer to come around. But wait, say the theologians – you need to accept the forgiveness for it to be valid. If you choose not to accept the forgiveness, it will be your own choice to be thrown into Hell. Not so. Love doesn't care whether its forgiveness is acknowledged – and it doesn't punish people for not accepting forgiveness – what kind of forgiveness, accepted or not, involves punishment? Not the kind of sincere forgiveness which I describe. Not accepting forgiveness, and choosing to live on in guilt or shame or ignorance or power-hunger, is its own punishment, for it brings only unhappiness to its perpetrator. Harm attracts its own consequences. No additional punishment is necessary. The results of declining to accept forgiveness last only as long as the refusal itself. No longer. Keeping in mind that I've come to this as a result of experiences in my own life, I'll use the premise that God is Love to make one more point: A god who forgives all and loves all and condemns no one to Hell is infinitely more loving than any god who would condemn someone to Hell. And seeing as I believe that I could become, with decades of practice, the type of person who, given the choice, would condemn no person to eternal punishment, that pretty much means that I could become more loving than any supposed god who would abandon and torment anyone. And if I, a human, full of many negative unloving things, could achieve this (and I do believe it is possible), than how much more love and forgiveness could a being of pure goodwill and compassion be capable of producing? A hell of a lot more. Or should I say a heaven?

- Carlton Pearson, Church of God in Christ, Oral Roberts; book The Gospel of Inclusion.
- Rob Bell, Love Wins; 2011 Time Magazine listed him in its 100 Most Influential People in the World. Studied under Ed Dobson at Calvary Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Founded Mars Hill Bible Church in Michigan, left after a falling out with the congregation over his book Love Wins.
- God did rain down burning sulfur on the people of Sodom and Gomorrah; II Peter 2:6 says God “made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly.” Jude 7 says “They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.”
- Matthew 10:28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.
- Matthew 3:10, 12; 5:22; 7:19; 8:12; 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50; 18:8-9; 22:13; 24:45-51; 25:30, 41; Luke 16:19-31; II Thess.1:5-10; Rev.14:9-11a; 20:11-15.
- Hell and eternal punishment are real, but God has provided a way of escape. It is by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. John 3:16.