

Sodom: Judgement and Mercy

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[0:00] If you have a copy of the Scriptures, I would like you to turn to Genesis chapter 19.

! We are back in this chapter for another week, and considering and looking at the city of Sodom this morning.!

We looked at Lot, the character of Lot, and who Lot is. We ask the question, is Lot a villain, or is he a victim of his circumstances?

And our conclusion is that he was neither of those. Lot was neither of those things. He was, according to the Apostle Peter, Lot was in fact righteous, that he was a good man.

And yet, because of his foolish decisions, Peter says that he was tormenting himself day and night, being surrounded by and having to deal with the sinfulness of the city of Sodom on a continual basis.

[1:07] So this morning, what I want us to do is to turn our attention to that city. I want us to turn our attention to the city of Sodom to consider the judgment that fell upon Sodom. In fact, Sodom is almost synonymous now with sin and the judgment of God that falls upon sin in many people's minds.

And not without good reason, because throughout the Old Testament and even into the New Testament, when a prophet or an apostle or even Jesus himself wants to emphasize the sinfulness of a people, whether it's a city or a nation, or if he wants to emphasize the justness of God's great judgment that is coming upon them, he will often, Jesus, the apostles, the prophet, will often point back towards Sodom, and oftentimes coupled with its sister city of Gomorrah, will point back to those great cities and make comparisons between them.

So that if you find yourself being compared to Sodom, that's a dangerous thing, that's a bad thing. If there was a city in the Old Testament and one of the prophets says, you're like your sister Sodom, which we hear several times in the prophets, that's an immediate sign that they have gone overboard, that they have crossed some sort of line.

We recognize, the Scriptures recognize, that we are all sinners, that we're all, in a sense, worthy of God's just judgment, but there is a line at times that can be crossed, and the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament writers will often express that line being crossed by making a comparison back to Sodom and its sister city of Gomorrah.

You are like Sodom, oftentimes we will read. And so I want us this morning to consider Sodom, but not just consider Sodom, but to think about the judgment that God brought upon that great city, to ask ourselves, what sort of judgment was this?

[2:54] What was happening here? What really occurred? And what is this judgment teaching us as we read about it in the book of Genesis? And then secondly, why did this judgment fall upon Sodom?

What is the line that they sort of crossed? It's not as if there weren't other sinful people living in the promised land at that time. It's not as if there weren't other sinful nations around the world that we might look at and say, hey, God should probably do something about them as well.

There were, but there was something, some sort of line that had been crossed that brought God's immediate judgment and condemnation upon them. And so I want us to ask the question, what exactly happened?

What brought this judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah? And then I want us to pause to think as we notice, even in the midst of this story of judgment, we notice the faithfulness and mercy of God sort of interwoven through there.

So we're going to jump in the middle of chapter 19 this morning in verse 12 and read down through verse 29. And I'd invite you all to stand with me as we read. If you're using one of the church Bibles scattered around there, you can simply turn to page 13.

[4:01] And jumping in there at verse 12, we read this. Then the men said to Lot, have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place.

But we are about to destroy this place because the outcry against his people has become great before the Lord and the Lord has sent us to destroy it. So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, up, get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city.

But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting. As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.

But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. And as they brought them out, one said, escape for your life, do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley, escape to the hills, lest you be swept away.

And Lot said to them, oh no, my lords, behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life. But I cannot escape to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I die.

[5:19] Behold, this city is near enough to flee to, and there's a little one. Let me escape there. Is it not a little one? And my life will be saved. He said to him, behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken.

Escape there quickly, for I can do nothing till you arrive there. Therefore, the name of that city was called Zoar. The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar. Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven.

And he overthrew those cities and all the valley and all the inhabitants of the cities and what grew on the ground. But Lot's wife behind him looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord. And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley. And he looked and behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.

So it was that when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.

[6:24] Father, thank you for this passage. Thank you for teaching us about yourself. And I pray this morning that by the power of the Spirit, we would look through the lens of Genesis 19 and see Jesus clearly.

I ask these things in Christ's name. Amen. You guys, you guys take a seat. Sodom is, in fact, synonymous with both sin and judgment.

And when we consider the judgment of Sodom, we look in the text itself in Genesis 19, and the first thing that we see about this judgment is that it is utter and complete. The cities of the valley were reduced to ashes.

God did not withhold His hand. God did not spare them. God brought not just judgment upon these cities, but what we see as we read through this passage is that God brought utter devastation and ruin upon these cities.

Take a look there. I want you to notice the description of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the valley. Verse 23, The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar.

[7:41] Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven. He overthrew those cities and all the valley and all the inhabitants of the cities and what grew on the ground.

The destruction was so complete that no longer was vegetation even able to grow in this entire region. Not simply the city of Sodom, but He says the entire valley where these five cities were located, God brought to utter ruin.

Remember back when Lot first was deciding where he would take his livestock as he and Abraham parted ways. When Lot looked to this particular valley, he saw that it was green and it was lush.

It was the kind of place that you would want to go to if you had animals to feed and people and livestock to care for. It was a well-watered valley.

It was a place of plenty and of vegetation. And yet now we see after God's judgment that nothing can grow there. Nothing is left. Later writers would even describe the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as containing nothing but dust and ashes.

[8:51] Nothing left at all. Nothing left to be seen. Nothing left to be rummaged through to find their leftovers. I mean, as the waters swept through Houston and all the surrounding areas in this part of Texas, they brought about great destruction.

But afterward, people were able to go into their homes for the most part and find some things that had survived, find some things that had not been ruined, that had not been swept away or completely destroyed by the waters as they came through.

Not so here. This is utter and complete destruction and devastation. There is nothing left. Not even the people are left. They are gone, wiped from the face of the earth.

Now, how that happened precisely is somewhat of a mystery. I mean, we are told that the Lord rained sulfur and fire out of heaven upon the cities. And there have been a number of people throughout history who have tried to come up with some sort of natural explanation for the events that we find here.

Whether it's some sort of volcanic eruption or something perhaps happening with, we know the tar and bitumen pits that were frequent in that area. Even when it was lush and green, there were still portions of the valley that contained a great amount of sulfur.

[10:04] And so there are those who would say it was some sort of cataclysmic natural event that brought about the destruction of these particular cities and that then led to the inclusion of this story in the book of Genesis.

Well, it's entirely possible that God may have used natural means to destroy these cities. That's possible. When He brought judgment upon the entire world through the flood, He did it through natural means, through the rain falling from the sky and through the waters and the depths of the earth coming up.

Those are natural events. And yet they happened on an unparalleled scale. So even though we don't know the precise details of how this happened, whether it was a natural event or what we would sometimes label a supernatural event, at the end of the day, we would have to say that this was a direct, this was a cause directly by God Himself, whether it was through some natural means or other means.

Sometimes maybe it is that we, that maybe we draw too sharp of a distinction between the natural and the supernatural. I mean, after all, God rules over the natural world. He created, the Bible through the New Testament tells us, all things, whether visible or invisible, all of them are created by Him and He sovereignly rules over all of them.

So God is the one in charge of the destruction regardless of the precise nature and means of the destruction itself. That's not what's emphasized in Genesis or in the rest of the Bible as the biblical writers look back and reflect upon the city of Sodom.

[11:34] That's not it. The mechanism of the judgment is not what's focused upon. But it is the purpose of the judgment. It is what this judgment is supposed to teach us and what it's supposed to direct our attention toward.

Hold your place there in Genesis. We turned here last week to 2 Peter and I want to turn here again because Peter makes some very important comments about this particular event.

In 2 Peter chapter 2, Peter says, if, in verse 6, if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, He, that is God, condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly.

Now pause there. What was God doing in this judgment? He was providing us with a picture. He was making Sodom and Gomorrah an example of what is going to happen in the future to the ungodly, which means that Sodom is a picture of the future final judgment that God will bring upon the world.

In the same way that the flood, that the judgment of God in the time of Noah upon the earth was a picture of what will happen someday, so also Sodom and Gomorrah is a picture of what will happen someday.

[13:00] The flood pictures the judgment in its scope. It will be the entire world. But Sodom and Gomorrah picture the judgment closer to its kind, involving fire and brimstone.

Turn a few pages in your Bible further toward the back to the book of Revelation. In Revelation chapter 20, we arrive at the final judgment and John's vision of that final judgment.

In Revelation chapter 20, verse 11, John says this, I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence, earth and sky fled away and no place was found for them.

I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne. The books were opened, then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books according to what they had done.

And the sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead who were with them. And they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.

[14:03] This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. The fire that falls upon Sodom and the surrounding cities is a picture, it is an example of the final judgment that is most certainly to come upon those whose names are not written in the book of life.

It's coming. It will happen. And as we read about Sodom and we read about the destruction of Sodom, we shouldn't be distracted by trying to figure out how did this happen and where exactly.

We don't even know exactly where the cities were. Where were they? And trying archaeologically to piece things together. We shouldn't be so consumed with that and forget that the story of Sodom is not telling us simply about what happened once upon a time long ago.

The story of Sodom is telling us about what's going to happen and what we are all going to face. There is a great judgment coming and you will either, like Sodom, perish in that judgment through fire.

Or you will be found written with your name written in the book of life. And you will survive the judgment as Lot and his daughters survived the judgment.

[15:20] The judgment of Sodom happens in order to point us toward the ultimate and final judgment that is not for a city or a few cities in an area, but is for the entire world.

But then we have to ask ourselves the question, why Sodom? Why Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities? Why these particular cities?

Could not God have made an example out of many other places? I suppose perhaps He could have. But there are reasons, there are biblical reasons for God finally bringing His judgment upon these cities.

Even when we are introduced to these cities, when Lot goes first to live near the city of Sodom, the note that we are given is that the city of Sodom was wicked and evil.

That's what we know about this city. There is something about Sodom that causes it to stand head and shoulders above others when wickedness, when sinfulness, is being measured.

[16:29] If you look earlier in chapter 19 in Genesis, God speaks of the sin of Sodom, of the sin of these cities, and He speaks of how wicked they are.

He speaks of how He has seen their wickedness and He knows their wickedness. In fact, if you look back in chapter 18 when God speaks about the sinfulness of the city of Sodom, when He first decides, I'm going to tell this to Abram, I'm going to reveal to Abram what I'm about to do.

Look at what He says in verse 20. The Lord said, because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see what they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to Me.

Now sometimes we're confused by this I will go down to see type of language. And we think, well, doesn't He already know? I mean, He's already said He's aware of their sins, so why does He need to go down and see?

And this is language that is used in the book of Genesis to describe impending judgment. If God said He's going to go down or He's going to go and see and look, that's not God trying to discern, trying to ascertain whether or not He will bring judgment.

[17:41] That sort of language is used. It's used in Genesis chapter 6 as God pronounces judgment upon the world. It's used again in Genesis chapter 11 as God decides He's going to bring judgment upon those who were building the Tower of Babel.

This is the language that God uses to essentially say, I'm coming in judgment. It is certain. I will go down and I will see. He's saying, I'm going.

I'm coming in judgment. And the reason He says is that their sin is very grave. But what is it? What exactly have they done?

There have been a number of answers proposed to that question. What was it that Sodom did? What was it that these cities of the valley did that brought God's judgment upon them? There's one view that we might want to call the restrictive view.

This view says that, well, essentially it was the sin of homosexuality that brought God's judgment upon the city of Sodom. Not in the sense of some individuals living a homosexual lifestyle, but in the sense of a culture and a society that had fully embraced homosexuality as normative, as just normal for life.

[18:53] And the restrictive view will say, that was it. That was the reason for judgment coming upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Then there is what you might call a revisionist approach to Genesis chapter 19, which wants to go in the other direction.

It wants to say that, no, the sin of homosexuality, and they wouldn't call it a sin. That's the point of the revisionist approach. Their approach is to say that, no, that had nothing to do with God's judgment.

God brought judgment upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for other reasons, not homosexuality. And they will be quick to point out that even the treatment of the two angels in Genesis chapter 19 could be classified in terms in the category of rape rather than simply homosexuality for something that made God angry.

The revisionist interpretation, assuming and accepting that homosexuality should be affirmed and embraced, wants to move away from any interpretation of these events that would say that the cause of God's judgment falling upon these cities was rampant homosexuality in the city and in the culture.

And they will actually point to biblical evidence for this particular view. We should not dismiss a view simply because we disagree with some of their presuppositions. We have to consider it.

[20:15] We have to think about it, especially when they are citing Scripture to support it. So I want you to see the passage that's often cited to explain the sin of Sodom. Turn over to Ezekiel chapter 16.

Hold your place in Genesis 19. We'll be back. But turn over to Ezekiel chapter 16. And something interesting is said here. In fact, this is the only place in the Old Testament where the sin of Sodom is actually described in detail.

Verse 48. As I live, declares the Lord, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done.

This is one of those places where there's a comparison being made. He's speaking to His own people. And He's saying to the Israelites that Sodom was not even as bad as you have become.

It's a way of highlighting their sinfulness. And then He goes on and He says, verse 49, Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom. So here it is. Described clearly for us.

[21:25] She and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease. But they did not aid the poor and needy.

Well, there you have. There's a clear description. They're prideful. They were wealthy and yet refused to help the poor and needy. They were greedy and selfish and disregarded those around them who had needs.

And clearly, the prophet Ezekiel is saying that that's what brought God's judgment upon the people. And there, the revisionist approach to Genesis 19 will stop and say, now we have our answer.

No need to reference homosexual behavior in any form or fashion. We have the answer. Except, you have to read the next verse. Which they very rarely do.

Verse 50. They, this is the Sodomites, they were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them when I saw it.

[22:29] The key word here is this word, abomination. Now we see the same word in verse 47, but it's in the plural, abominations. And here's what you need to know about this particular Hebrew word.

If you want to circle it or underline, put a note in your margin. When this word occurs in the plural, and this is consistent throughout the Old Testament, when this word occurs in the plural, it refers to a broad range of sins.

There it's being used to refer to this entire catalog of sins. It can be used broadly to refer to all sorts of sins when it's plural. But when we find this word in the singular, as we find it here in verse 50, they did an abomination before me.

When we find it in the singular, consistently throughout the Old Testament, it refers to homosexual behavior. Now I'll just give you one example this morning.

Turn to the book of Leviticus. Leviticus chapter 20. In Leviticus chapter 20, we're going to see this word once again in the singular. Verse 13.

[23:37] If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed, here it is, an abomination. An abomination. So this particular term in the singular, when it's referring to one particular sin, is used in the Old Testament to describe homosexual behavior.

So when we come to the book of Ezekiel and we look at Ezekiel's description of the sins of Sodom, I believe that Ezekiel is going to rule out both the restrictive view and the revisionist view.

Because Ezekiel clears and shows us that there were other considerations, there were other sins. There was pride. There was the oppression of the four. There was greed. Those were real causes of God's judgment coming upon the city.

That's true. But Ezekiel also tells us that this particular sin was present and was a cause, was a reason for the judgment that fell upon Sodom.

In fact, when we turn to the New Testament, we find confirmation of this. Turn all the way near the back of your Bible to the book of Jude. Jude, like 2 Peter, references Sodom.

[24:53] And he says this in Jude, verse 7, Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, now listen, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

There's that example language again, but what I want you to notice here are two terms. Sexual immorality and unnatural desire.

The term sexual immorality is actually a fairly common term throughout the New Testament. And it's a very broad term that refers to any sort of sexual behavior outside the confines of marriage.

Anything outside of marriage is deemed by the New Testament writers to be sexual immorality. Any sexual activity outside of marriage is automatically in this category of sexual immorality.

It is the word pornea from which we get the term pornography. And so everything falls in that category. But then there is a subcategory, a narrow category within that category.

[26:02] And here in Jude it's referred to as unnatural desires. And you need to note that word unnatural because while the Old Testament tends to use the singular word abomination to describe this, the New Testament writers tend to use this language as something being unnatural to describe homosexual behavior.

I'll show you what I mean. Turn over to Romans chapter 1. Romans chapter 1 verse 26. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions.

For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature. or that could be translated as unnatural. Contrary to nature.

And the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another. Men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

consistently the New Testament and the men consistently the New Testament writers use this language of unnatural to describe homosexual behavior. And the writer of the book of Jude, Jude himself says that that was a cause of God's judgment that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

[27:21] Not that alone. Even Jude lists other things. Even Jude considers the broader category of sexual immorality in general. So that when we look at Ezekiel and we look at the book of Jude what we realize is that God's judgment fell upon the city of Sodom for a number of sins that they committed.

Pride, greed, oppression of the poor, rampant sexual immorality, and homosexuality treated as normal among the people.

Remember as the men gathered outside the door of Lot. We considered this last week. As they gathered outside the door of Lot and they demanded that these men be brought out to them that they might know them that Moses takes great pains as he writes this story to tell us that every single man in the city young and old were gathered outside the door of Lot.

This was not a tendency of a small portion of the population. This was simply a part of life for them. And that coupled with their other sins brought God's judgment upon Sodom and the surrounding cities.

Why? Why does God's judgment fall on these cities? What line did they cross? They became in their behavior and in their thinking they became consumed with a way of life that is entirely contrary to the Word of God.

[29:06] Consumed with it and controlled by it. The wickedness in their own hearts and in their behavior had risen to a level that God simply said no more.

No more of this. Much like the people living before the flood God finally said no more. We're never told in the scriptures where precisely that line is.

Right? We're never told well your society can go this far but no further. No because we would go right up to the line every time. We're never told precisely where the line is only that there is a line that there is a threshold and when sinfulness crosses that threshold God is done being patient.

God is finished with being long suffering and judgment will most certainly he will come he will see he will visit and he will bring with him judgment upon those people and that place.

And this happens continually throughout the scriptures. We must not forget that there is there is a line that ought not to be crossed.

[30:25] Now we could be pessimists right? This is easy to fall into the trap of being a pessimist. We could be pessimists we could look around us at our culture whether it's at our city or our country we could look around us and we could say oh we have to have crossed that line by now.

We have to have. I mean judgment is certain to come upon us I mean that catalog of sins there for Sodom I mean I see them all around me I see them every time I turn on the television I see them every time I read the news or watch the news I see them all the time we must have crossed that line there must be no point of return for us.

We could be pessimists and approach things that way. Or on the other hand we could imitate Abraham. When God told Abraham I'm bringing judgment upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah Abraham's response was not to say yeah they're pretty bad I mean I'm not too far away and I've heard about them and I've seen and I know and they're bad and yeah it's coming.

That's not Abraham's response. Abraham's response is to fall on his knees and plead with God. Oh God even if there are only ten righteous people in the entire city will you not spare it?

Will you not let it remain? That's Abraham's approach. Of course we could go the other extreme. We could take the approach of the prophet Jonah when it comes to the destruction of a city the judgment of a culture and a society.

[31:55] God told Jonah go to that great and wicked city Nineveh go. They're great they're wicked. We don't know precisely where the line is but they've got to be close to that line.

I mean it was a wicked wicked city in the midst of a wicked nation. It was bad. God said to Jonah go. And Jonah falling on the furthest possible end of the pessimist pessimist scale I suppose doesn't simply say oh you know you're going to judge them.

That's not what he says. Jonah refuses to go because he wants them to be judged. Jonah wants the people of Nineveh to fall under God's judgment.

He's angry when God shows them mercy. He's angry when God does not judge them at the end of the book. The end of the book of Jonah is one of the most depressing ends to any of the books of scripture.

It ends with him just sitting there pouting wishing that he had died instead of being sent there to tell the people to repent of their sins. And sometimes you think oh I'm not like Jonah but be honest.

[33:03] Are there not times when you read the news or listen to the news and you have the thought in your head oh God when are you going to just come and deal with these people?

When are you going to come and just take care of this? When are you going to finally intervene and judge because I know all these people deserve it. You need to do something here God. We want it to happen.

We're like Jonah rather than Abraham who desperately pleads with God that he might show mercy to these cities.

We're to pursue conformity to the pattern of Abraham at least as far as his prayer life goes and his attitude towards sinners around us goes. We're to avoid the temptation to say it's too far gone and avoid the temptation to say it's too far gone and I want you to come and bring your judgment now because they deserve it.

Rather we ought to be on our knees interceding on behalf of everyone around us regardless of the sin that they've fallen into regardless of the level of their sinfulness we ought to be in prayer we ought to be those interceding on behalf of others around us praying that God might rescue them praying that God might save and deliver them from their sins and at the same time bringing the message repent and believe and be saved be rescued from your sins just as Jonah was sent into the great and wicked city of Nineveh to preach that message just as Jesus came preaching repent and believe the kingdom of God is at hand we should be not handing over those around us to God's judgment but trying to snatch them out of the fire in order that they might be saved by God's mercy and we should recognize that God's mercy is found in unexpected places and at surprising times because the mercy of God is woven through this story of judgment in

[35:10] Genesis chapter 19 it really and truly is we might be inclined to think that God's rescue and saving of Lot is not due to mercy because Peter tells us that Lot was righteous we might be inclined to think well God saved Lot because Lot deserved to be saved because Lot was as Peter says righteous and so he should have been saved it's not mercy that's just what God ought to have done that's what should have happened there are two mistakes that we make when we do that number one is we don't recognize the ways in which righteousness language can be used in the Bible there are a lot of different ways in which the language of righteousness can be used but two of them that I think we need to constantly remember is that the word righteous can be used in sort of an absolute sense right if we're talking about God's righteousness then obviously that's in an absolute sense that's in the sense of he's perfect he's holy he is without stain he is completely and totally righteous when we consider the humanity of

Jesus and his life upon the earth and we say that he was righteous we mean that he as the writer of Hebrews says he was without sin he was fully and perfectly righteous so righteous can be used in an absolute sense but also righteous is frequently used in the scriptures in a comparative sense what I mean is is that a person can be called righteous relative to the people that surround them not righteous when compared to God's ultimate absolute standard of righteousness which is his own perfection nobody measures up to that but in a comparative sense in which next to the people around them or compared to other people in general this person is righteous that's much the same way in which we will say to say that oh that person is a good person now if we if we have a good solid biblical theology and we say that we don't mean that they're good by God's actual standards of goodness Paul says quoting the Old Testament there is none good no not one he says there is no one righteous in an absolute sense no but in a comparative sense absolutely Noah was righteous in his generation Moses says not absolutely compared to God's perfect perfect standards but comparatively was Noah righteous yes comparatively was Lot righteous yes but does that place some sort of claim upon God that God is bound to rescue Lot certainly not after Lot foolishly offered up his own daughters and to the people to the men of

Sodom to do whatever they wished with him he's comparatively righteous but none of us no matter how great our comparable righteousness might be is worthy of rescue from the judgment of God I think that's borne out by a careful reading of Genesis 19 go back to our main text this morning and I want you to see exactly what motivated what stood behind God's rescue of Lot verse 15 opens the following morning after the two men angels have come after the people in the city have demanded that these two men be given to them after these two men have revealed themselves to be angelic beings by blinding the men of the city and apparently that caused the dispersal of the crowd after Lot has gone and begged his sons in law to come and escape with them and they've said no and laughed at him after all of those things we're told that the dawn has arrived as morning dawn verse 15 the angels urged Lot saying up take your wife and your two daughters who are here lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city and then there are just there are three words that astound me but he lingered why are you lingering they've shown their authority and their power they miraculously blinded every man in the city they're clearly capable of doing what they're saying what they say they're going to do

Lot knows with a certainty that judgment is coming and yet he lingers why does he linger I think probably out of fear we're told later on that he was afraid that he didn't think that he could survive escaping from the city he didn't think that he would be able to even make it to the to the hill country and that's why he begs and says just let me go to this little city over here it's little you can just leave this little city let me go there and you just say fine fine go there go there I think he's afraid I think that he doesn't really know what to do even when you know the disaster is nearly upon you you can be frozen in fear we saw story after story of people who remained in their homes far too long when they knew the flood was coming when they knew that waters would be released in the rivers when they knew things were happening there were many many people who yet remained in their homes for various reasons but some of them no doubt because they were just in the face of all of this and all of this information and this news and this terrible thing that was about to happen they were just frozen in fear and they weren't making good decisions I think that's lot I think he's lingering because he's just afraid and confused and doesn't know what to do it's foolishness it's on display again I think then we read so the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand now look notice the

Lord being merciful to him what stands behind God's deliverance of Lot and his family mercy sheer mercy the Lord being merciful to him says they brought them out and they set him outside the city that's incredible mercy not only to show up the night before and warn him but when the moment comes and he's frozen in fear and he's acting foolish and he's not escaping to take him by the hand and lead him out and say go now that's incredible mercy the basis of that mercy is maybe the only thing that's more incredible look all the way down to verse 29 the last verse that we read earlier so it was that when God destroyed the cities of the valley God remembered

[42:05] Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived God we are told remembered Abraham and that was what brought mercy to Lot in what sense God remember Abraham well I think on the surface level I think God is honoring Abraham's request in chapter 18 but certainly beyond that the language of God remembering Abraham is very close it's parallel to the repeated language throughout the rest of the book of Genesis and much of the Old Testament of God remembering his covenant that he made with Abraham over and over we are told that God shows mercy to the people of Israel because he remembers the covenant that he made with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob so what's happening here is God is giving mercy to Lot because God is remembering his covenant promises to Abraham that is

God is being faithful to his promises because Lot falls under that great umbrella of the covenant that God made with Abraham it's been made clear that that Law is receiving grace and mercy throughout these chapters because of his connection to Abraham even when Lot departs from Abraham God's mercy extends out of God's faithfulness to his promises to Abraham that's why Lot is rescued ultimately because God is always faithful to his covenant promises and all those tied to the covenant promises receive the benefit and the blessings of the covenant that God has made he never fails to be faithful to his promises when God reveals himself to Moses as he's sending Moses out to once again speak to the people of Israel God says to Moses that he is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love that word steadfast love has confounded translators for centuries because it's not a word that most languages can express so you'll see in some of your translations you'll see the word loving kindness appear over and over and it's the same word sometimes it'll just be rendered simply love sometimes steadfast love because it's a term that refers in a unique sense to God's commitment to his covenant promises God is slow to anger and abounding in his commitment to uphold his covenant promises that's who he is that's what God is like mercy runs through this chapter of judgment because though God is slow to anger he eventually executes his wrath and yet being wrathful he is always in the midst of it faithful to all the promises that he has made and he rescues those who belong to his covenant people

I believe that this story the story of Lot's the story of Sodom and the cities of the valley I believe that like the rest of the Old Testament it is meant to point us and direct our attention to the work of Jesus on the cross in our place because what's happening on the cross what exactly is Jesus doing as he hangs on a Roman cross and gives up his life what is he doing he is being what the New Testament writers call a propitiation that is a sacrifice that absorbs and removes the wrath of God that's what he's doing Jesus is bearing for his people he is bearing the wrath of God in their place it is as if Jesus is leaning over us and shielding us while the fire and brimstone rain down on his own back and we stand safe and secure in Christ while he bears the penalty of all of our great sinfulness because God is faithful to his covenant and Jesus says that he establishes a new covenant in his blood a new covenant in which all the covenant promises of the Old Testament find their fulfillment a new covenant in which the Abrahamic covenant finally comes to its fruition in which the seed of Abraham

Jesus Christ himself comes into the world and does all that is necessary to rescue and deliver his covenant people this is what the story of Sodom is about it's not merely about judgment the story of Sodom is ultimately about the mercy of God in the midst of judgment put on display nowhere more clearly than on the cross of Christ so what are we to do with that?

what do we make about with this lavish display of mercy and the reality of coming judgment in the future? I think all of us need to be aware that someday we will be weighed in the scales of God's justice every single one of us and sometimes when people speak of the scales of God's justice they picture in their mind all of their good deeds placed on one side all of their bad deeds placed on another side and we'll see which one hopefully the good deeds outweigh the bad and I'll be okay I think that kind of thinking is what is what most people mean when they say I think I'll go to heaven because I've been a pretty good person because overall I'm pretty good I try to help my neighbor I try to be kind I try to raise my kids to be good people I know I've done a few crazy things I've messed up and made some serious mistakes but at the end of the day

[48 : 37] I'm a good person I think they have in mind this picture of the scales of God's justice being my sin on one side my goodness on the other and ultimately my goodness outweighs my sin but I don't think that's the picture of God's scales of justice that we ought to have in our minds at all God is not weighing our sin versus our righteousness oh no He is weighing our righteousness against His righteousness and they either balance or we fail the test and come under His judgment His perfect righteousness on one side of the scale and all of our goodness on the other side and they don't balance we're done and by ourselves they will never balance they will never even come close never once will they balance the scales His righteousness will outweigh our righteousness every time and we will face the judgment be holy as I am holy

God says and we don't measure up to that at all and yet Jesus not only bears the weight of our sin upon the cross oh no He does far more than that Jesus gives as a free gift to all those who trust in Him His righteousness and when we stack His righteousness on the scales they balance perfectly because His righteousness is the very righteousness and perfection of God Himself and apart from that great exchange our sin punished on the cross for the free gift of His righteousness through faith we are without hope in the day of judgment our only hope is the limitless boundless mercy of God that extends to us not only forgiveness of our sins but the counting of perfect righteousness to be ours through faith let's pray for a second

Thank you.