

Faithful During Distress

Genesis 19:1, 4, 5, 15-26, 29

SS Lesson for 09/01/2019

Devotional Scripture: Luke 17:22, 26-37

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Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Lot was a nephew of the great patriarch Abraham. Lot is first mentioned in the Bible in the genealogy of Abraham's brother (Genesis 11:27). Lot accompanied Abraham and his household when they journeyed from Ur to Canaan (11:31). Following a brief time in Egypt, the family returned to an area south of where the tribe of Judah eventually settles centuries later (13:1, 3). When land disputes broke out, Abraham allowed his nephew to choose the land he wanted for pasture (13:8, 9). Lot saw that the territory in the vicinity of Sodom and Gomorrah was especially desirable, so he settled nearby (13:10, 11). The exact location of Sodom and Gomorrah is uncertain; some scholars place them within what later came to be the territory of Moab (Isaiah 15:5; Jeremiah 48:33, 34). Along with Zoar, Sodom and Gomorrah are listed as cities located on the Jordan plain (Genesis 13:10-12; see also 14:2, 8). Genesis 13:13 offers an ominous assessment: "The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Lot is a puzzling figure in the Bible. He perhaps understood from his uncle Abraham something of the Lord's righteous standards. Indeed, the New Testament depicts Lot as someone deeply troubled over the wickedness in Sodom. Second Peter 2:7 says that the Lord "delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation [or way of life] of the wicked." Verse 8 describes Lot as a "righteous man," who "vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." However, Lot also seems to have become attached to life in Sodom despite the tension between his righteousness and the wickedness of the city. Genesis 18 begins with an account of the Lord's visit with Abraham. He was one of three "men" who came to Abraham (Genesis 18:2). After confirming the Lord's promise that Sarah would conceive and bear a son (18:10), the three "looked toward Sodom" (18:16). The Lord told Abraham of His intention to discover more about the extent of the sin within both Sodom and Gomorrah (18:20, 21). Verse 22 records that "the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the Lord." At that point the exchange between the Lord and Abraham about sparing the righteous in Sodom occurred. Because the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah became "very grievous" in the Lord's sight (18:20), He determined that judgment must be carried out on them. Despite Abraham's intercession and God's willingness to relent from judgment, both cities were to be destroyed for lack of 10 righteous people (18:22-33).

Key Verse: Gen 19:29

And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

This chapter records God's judgment on a morally bankrupt Canaanite civilization, but it also provides a severe warning against others becoming like them: it was difficult to get Lot out of Sodom, and Sodom out of Lot's family. Lot was an upright citizen, hospitable and generous (vv. 2-3), and a leader of the community. Actually he was a judge, for he "was sitting in the gateway of the city" (v. 1; cf. v. 9). Judges usually sat by the city gates, public places (cf. Job 29:7, 12-17) where legal and business transactions were finalized (cf. Gen. 23:18). As a judge Lot sought to screen out the wickedness of his townfolk and to give advice on good living. He knew truth and justice, righteousness and evil. He was "a righteous man" (2 Peter 2:7-8). Yet in spite of his denunciation of their lifestyle, he liked the good life of Sodom's society. He preferred making money off its citizens to staying in the hills (cf. Gen. 13:10-11) where there would be no filthy living but also no "good life." The hour of truth came with the visitation from on high. Lot seemed godly and pure, but he was hypocritical. His words were not taken seriously (19:14). The "saint" at first

pitched his tent near Sodom, but later Sodom controlled his life. He was moral, for he opposed sodomy and homosexuality; he knew great evil when he saw it. But ironically he was willing to sacrifice his daughters' virginity to fend off the vice of Sodomite men (v. 8). He escaped judgment by the grace of God, but his heart was in Sodom. His wife was too attached to the city to follow the call of grace, and his daughters had no qualms against having sex with their drunk and naked father (vv. 30-35). As long as the Lord left Lot alone, he would seek to profess faith while at the same time living in Sodom. Ultimately he could not have both. Sodom would have destroyed him if the Lord had not destroyed Sodom.

19:1-14. The two angels (cf. 18:2, 22) were reluctant visitors to **Lot**. In spite of Lot's hospitality, they preferred to lodge **in the square**. But when the angels were in Lot's **house.... all the men... of the city... surrounded the house**. They wanted to **have sex with** (lit., "to know," i.e., sexually) Lot's visitors. They wanted homosexual relations with these two who they thought were men. As angels, they apparently were handsome. The men's vileness was matched, surprisingly, by Lot's hypocrisy, for he was willing to give them his virgin **daughters** (19:8). To protect one's guests was part of hospitality, but this was going too far! Lot's pleas for righteousness (v. 7) were now wasted as the Sodomites saw a different side of their **judge** (v. 9). He might as well have mocked. The angels then **pulled Lot back into the house**, made the **men** outside the **door** blind, and told Lot to **get... out** because they were **going to destroy** the city. When Lot told this to his two daughters' fiancés, they did not believe him.

19:15-22. Early in the morning **the angels** literally had to drag **Lot** from **the city** (v. 16). **The LORD**, of course, **was** being **merciful** in sparing Lot for Abraham's sake (cf. 18:23; 19:29). But even after he was delivered, **Lot** wrung a concession out of the angels. He wanted to go to the **small town** of **Zoar**, which means "a little one" (vv. 18-22). (Before that it was known as Bela, 14:2.) But this scene would always remind Israel of Lot, lingering and halting, being dragged to safety. Why do some of God's people fall in with the corrupt world rather than willingly flee a society destined for destruction?

19:23-29. With **burning sulfur** the Lord **overthrew** the wicked **cities and the entire plain** in a great destruction (vv. 24-25). Some have suggested that deposits of sulfur erupted from the earth (cf. the "tar pits," 14:10), and then showered down **out of the heavens** in flames of fire (cf. Luke 17:29). **Lot's wife** gazed **back** intently and was changed into **a pillar of salt**, a monument to her disobedience. The **dense smoke** (19:28) Abraham saw was caused by the burning sulfur (v. 24). Though **God** judged the sinners in **the cities of the plain**, He also **remembered Abraham**, that is, God remembered his request (18:23-32) and saved **Lot** from **the catastrophe**.

19:30-38. This closing section records the incident of Lot's **two daughters** in a mountain cave. **Lot** had been **afraid** to flee to the mountains (v. 19) so he went instead to **Zoar** (v. 22). But now, ironically, he **left Zoar for the mountains and lived in a cave** (v. 30). What a contrast with the "progressive civilization" (Luke 17:28) of the city of Sodom, which he had left.

Thinking their chances for remarrying were slim (Gen. 19:31), the two daughters, whose fiancés were killed in the holocaust of Sodom, took turns getting their father drunk and having sex with him (vv. 32-35). Their acts of incest show Sodom's influence on them. They gave birth to boys, **Moab** and **Ben-Ammi**, whose descendants were the **Moabites** and **Ammonites** (vv. 36-38), perennial enemies of Israel. "Moab" sounds like the words "from father," and "Ben-Ammi" means "son of my kinsman." These etymologies perpetuated for Israel the ignominious beginning of these wicked enemies. Four major motifs are in this chapter: God's swift judgment on the vile Canaanites, Lot's close attachment to the wicked society, God's merciful sparing of Lot from the doom, and "the rebirth of Sodom" in the cave. Through these, Israel could see that if God judges a people severely, He is righteous because of their great evil. She also could learn of the folly of becoming attached to the wickedness of Canaan. How should one live, then, knowing how God dealt with the Canaanites? The lesson is quite clear: "Do not love the world or anything in the world... [for] the world and its desires [lusts] pass away" (1 John 2:15, 17) under the judgment of God. It is dangerous and folly to become attached to the present corrupt world system because it awaits God's swift and sudden destruction. Jesus referred to Genesis 19:26 to warn of the destruction to come on unbelieving Israel: "Remember Lot's wife!" (Luke 17:32) When Christ returns, people should not look back as she did (Luke 17:30-31). If an unbeliever craves the best of this world he will lose both this world (since it passes away) and life in the next world (Luke 17:33-37). Jesus also said that if the miracles He did in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, the Sodomites would have repented (Matt. 11:23). As it is, "it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment" than for the cities of Galilee (Matt. 11:24). This signifies that God judges according to knowledge, and that judgment greater than physical destruction awaits sinners.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

God's Faithfulness to Warn (Gen 19:1, 4-5, 15-23)

1 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.

4 Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house.

5 And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally."

15 When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city."

16 And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.

17 So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed."

18 Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords!

19 Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die.

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

21 And he said to him, "See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken.

22 Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

23 The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar.

Warnings through God's Word and messengers (1, 4-5, 15-17)

Warnings through God's word about wicked actions (Jer 7:13)

13 While you were doing all these things, declares the Lord, I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer.

Warnings through God's word about obedience (Jer 7:23-24)

23 but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you. 24 But they did not listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubborn inclinations of their evil hearts. They went backward and not forward.

Warnings through God's word about past examples (1 Cor 10:11)

11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

Warnings through God's word about false prophets (Jude 4)

4 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

Warnings through messengers about turning back to God (Jer 25:4-5)

4 And though the Lord has sent all his servants the prophets to you again and again, you have not listened or paid any attention. 5 They said, "Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the Lord gave to you and your fathers for ever and ever.

Warnings through messengers about God's curses (Jer 26:5-6)

5 and if you do not listen to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (though you have not listened), 6 then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city an object of cursing among all the nations of the earth."

Warnings through messengers that should not be refused (Heb 12:25)

25 See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?

Warnings that are questioned (18-20)

Questioning because of feeling wronged (Job 19:4-7)

4 If it is true that I have gone astray, my error remains my concern alone. 5 If indeed you would exalt yourselves above me and use my humiliation against me, 6 then know that God has wronged me and drawn his net around me. 7 "Though I cry, 'I've been wronged!' I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice.

Questioning because of bitterness (Job 27:2)

2 "As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice, the Almighty, who has made me taste bitterness of soul,

Questioning because of feeling forsaken (Isa 59:9-11)

9 So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. 10 Like the blind we grope along the wall, feeling our way like men without eyes. At midday we stumble as if it were twilight; among the strong, we are like the dead. 11 We all growl like bears; we moan mournfully like doves. We look for justice, but find none; for deliverance, but it is far away.

Questioning because of seeing others in better situations (Jer 12:1)

12 You are always righteous, O Lord, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?

Questioning because of feeling God is slow in His deliverance (Hab 1:2-4)

2 How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? 3 Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; here is strife, and conflict abounds. 4 Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

Warnings that require obedience (21-23)

Obedience to show faith (Gen 22:9-12)

9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Obedience to witness (Acts 8:26-31)

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road — the desert road — that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. 29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." 30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. 31 "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

Obedience regardless of prejudice (Acts 10:19-23)

19 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. 20 So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." 21 Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?" 22 The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." 23 Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along.

Obedience to follow Jesus (Matt 9:9)

9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

Obedience because God provides a chance to resist sin (John 5:14)

14 Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."

Obedience because it leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Obedience because it shows that we love God (2 John 6)

6 And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

God's Faithfulness in Judgment (Gen 19:24-26)

24 Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens.
25 So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.
26 But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

Judgment on earth (24-25)

Judgment on earth because of the sin of man (Rom 8:19-23)

19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Judgment on earth by the hand of God (Job 12:7-11)

7 "But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; 8 or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. 9 Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? 10 In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.

Judgment on earth because of man's disobedience (Isa 24:5-7)

5 The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.

Judgment on earth because of man's wickedness (Jer 12:4)

4 How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished. Moreover, the people are saying, "He will not see what happens to us."

Judgment on earth as part of man's punishment (1 Sam 15:2-4)

2 This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. 3 Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.'"

Judgment for disobedience (24-25)

Disobedience caused by bad choices (Prov 1:29-31)

29 Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the Lord, 30 since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, 31 they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.

Disobedience caused by doing evil (Jer 18:9-10)

9 And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, 10 and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

Disobedience caused by not knowing God (Titus 1:16)

16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Disobedience caused by stubbornness and forsaking God's word (Jer 9:13-14)

13 The Lord said, "It is because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them; they have not obeyed me or followed my law. 14 Instead, they have followed the stubbornness of their hearts; they have followed the Baals, as their fathers taught them."

Disobedience caused by violating God's covenant (Deut 17:2-5)

2 If a man or woman living among you in one of the towns the Lord gives you is found doing evil in the eyes of the Lord your God in violation of his covenant, 3 and contrary to my command has worshiped other gods, bowing down to them or to the sun or the moon or the stars of the sky, 4 and this has been brought to your attention, then you must investigate it thoroughly. If it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, 5 take the man or woman who has done this evil deed to your city gate and stone that person to death.

Disobedience caused by dishonoring God (Rom 2:23-24)

23 You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? 24 As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

God's Faithfulness in Mercy (Gen 19:29)

29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.

Mercy because of promises (29)

God is faithful to His promises and does not violate His covenants (Ps 89:33-36)

33 but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. 34 I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered. 35 Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness — and I will not lie to David — 36 that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun;

God remembers His covenants out of His great love (Ps 106:43-45)

43 Many times he delivered them, but they were bent on rebellion and they wasted away in their sin. 44 But he took note of their distress when he heard their cry; 45 for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented.

God is faithful to His promises by continuing to redeem His people (Ps 111:9)

9 He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever — holy and awesome is his name.

God is faithful to His promises by upholding His people (Isa 42:6)

6 "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,

God is faithful to His promises through Jesus' blood (Matt 26:28)

28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Mercy that delivers (29)

Deliverance from Satan (Matt 6:13)

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

Deliverance from deadly perils (2 Cor 1:10)

10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

Deliverance from troubles (Ps 34:19)

19 A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all;

Deliverance from trials (2 Peter 2:9)

9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

Deliverance from temptations by providing a way out (1 Cor 10:13)

13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Hospitality Versus Homosexuality (19:1-11)

“Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. And he said, ‘Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant’s house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.’ They said however, ‘No, but we shall spend the night in the square.’ Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate” (Genesis 19:1-3).

The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening. Lot, who was sitting at the city gate, identified them as mortal men and as strangers, but not as messengers of destruction. Since the elders of the city sat as judges at the gates of the city (cf. Job 29:7-12), it is not unlikely that Lot, over a period of time, had gained prominence and power. Personally, it seems to be the same kind as acquired by Billy Carter. You will remember that shortly after Lot moved to Sodom the city was sacked and carried off, only to be rescued by the heroic efforts of Abram (Genesis 14:1-16). Lot’s popularity and power may well have been derived from his relationship to Abraham.

This should in no way detract from the genuine hospitality offered the two strangers. The parallel with Abraham's hospitality in the previous chapter can hardly be accidental. This act, more than any other, evidenced the righteousness of Lot as indicated by Peter in his epistle. The apparent reluctance of the angels to accept until gently pressed by Lot is more a matter of culture and custom than anything else (cf. Luke 24:28-29).

While we are not told in concrete terms, it would seem that Lot's persistence is motivated as much by fear for the safety of the strangers as by his generosity. Well did he know the fate of those who did not have a haven for the night. In any other city, sleeping in the city square would not have been unusual or unwise. The depravity of Sodom caused Lot to courteously compel his guests to stay with him and to share his table with them. I am inclined to believe that Lot's meal was neither as serene nor as sumptuous as that shared at Abraham's table.

If Lot had hoped his guests had entered his home unnoticed, he was in for a great disappointment. Sick as it may seem, the men of the city may have had a keener eye for strangers than Lot. Their motives were corrupt and their intentions unspeakable. In a short time the entire city had gathered about Lot's house seeking sex with the strangers. This was not the 'broad-minded' tolerance of a city whose laws permitted such conduct between consenting adults in private. It was not even the shameless solicitation to sin. Rather, it was rape, and that of the worst form. Imagine it, a whole city, young and old. Surely judgment was due.

Lot's response is typical of his spiritual state; it is a strange blend of courage and compromise, of strength of character and situationalism. The crowd demanded that Lot turn over his guests, an unthinkable violation of the protection guaranteed one who comes under the roof of your house. Lot stepped outside, closing the door behind him, hoping to defuse the situation. He pleaded with them not to act wickedly, and, just as we are about to applaud his courage, he offers to surrender his two daughters to the appetites of these depraved degenerates. How unthinkable! Lot's virtue (his concern for his guests) has become a vice (a willingness to substitute his own daughters for strangers). We may breathe a sigh of relief that the crowd refused Lot's offer, but I must tell you that the consequences for this compromise are yet to be seen.

For twenty years Lot had lived in Sodom, yet he was still an alien to the men of the city. I suspect that the reason Lot had been left alone was that these people still remembered the military might of uncle Abraham. Had Lot been attacked they would have Abraham to deal with.

For years Lot had seemingly been content to stand aloof from the sin of this city, but not to rebuke it. Now he would play the part of the judge by speaking out against their wickedness. This was too much for the mob. Finally forced to protest their perversion, he has angered the mob. They will first deal with Lot, then with the other two.

Lot, who supposed it was his duty to save the strangers, is rescued by them. By the words they spoke, their identity and their task were revealed to Lot. Their sight either removed completely or dazzled and distorted, the men of the city groped for the door, but wore themselves out trying to find it (cf. II Kings 6:18).

Lot's Last Stand (19:12-22)

In those twilight hours before sunrise, Sodom saw more missionary activity from Lot than in all the previous years. His efforts were not trained upon the men of the city, however, but were a frantic and futile effort to save his own family, whom he had neglected to win.

Then the men said to Lot, 'Whom else have you here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring them out of the place; for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the Lord that the Lord has sent us to destroy it' (Genesis 19:12,13).

His sons-in-law were awakened and warned in what must have been a wild-eyed fashion. It was like trying to give the gospel to a rapidly dying man. No doubt Lot's demeanor did suggest something very bizarre. They took it all for some kind of joke:

And Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, 'Up, get out of this place, for the Lord will destroy the city.' But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting (Genesis 19:14).

Why? Why would they not take Lot seriously? Notice that we are not told that they refused to believe Lot so much as they did not even take him seriously. There seems to be only one possible explanation: Lot had never mentioned his faith before. His words were not a repetition of his life-long warnings of sin and Judgment—they are something totally new and novel. What a rebuke to the witness of Lot. It is one thing to warn men and have them reject our message. It is far worse for them not even to consider our words as spoken seriously.

Morning came without one new convert, let alone one righteous soul who would flee the wrath of God. Time was up. The angels ordered Lot to take his wife and his two daughters and get out of the city before judgment fell.

The unbelief of the citizens of Sodom is to some degree predictable, but the reluctance of Lot is incredible. Never before has anyone ever tried so hard to keep from being saved. There are several reasons why Lot may have been so hesitant and foot-dragging throughout the entire rescue. First, Lot in his carnal state may not have been fully convinced of the certainty and severity of the judgment. Second, he may have hoped by his delay, to stall for time, in order to preserve friends and family knowing that judgment could not come until he had departed (cf. verse 22). Third, Lot was so attached to this 'present world' of friends, family, and things that he just could not bear the thought of leaving it. In the final analysis Lot was literally dragged from the city by the angel.

And when 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 hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hands of his daughters, for the compassion of the Lord was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city (Genesis 19:15-16).

When given specific instruction to flee to the mountains as far from Sodom as possible (verse 17), Lot again resisted and plead for a less painful program:

But Lot said to them, 'Oh no, my lords! Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified your lovingkindness, which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest the disaster overtake me and I die; now behold, this town is near enough to flee to, and it is small. Please, let me escape there (is it not small?) that my life may be saved' (Genesis 19:18-20).

What a difference between the intercession of Abraham and the prayer (or plea) of Lot. Abraham prayed for the preservation of the cities for the sake of the righteous, particularly Lot and his family. Abraham had no selfish interest at stake. To the contrary, removing the peoples of the cities might have appeared to have left the land open for Abraham to possess.¹⁸⁰ Lot plead for the city of Zoar (previously Bela, Genesis 14:2), not for the sake of those who lived there, but for his own convenience. If judgment must fall, could God not make it easy on Lot? After all, wasn't it just a little city? And so the city was spared (verse 21).

Fire and Brimstone (19:23-26)

Sunrise came just as Lot, with his wife and daughters, approached Zoar (verse 23). Safely out of reach of the devastation, the Lord rained down fire and brimstone from heaven upon the cities of the valley. Many suggestions have been made as to the mechanics employed to bring about this destruction. While I believe that natural elements such as lightening, earthquakes, or volcanic eruptions, probably were involved, this makes it no less a miracle. This was judgment from the Lord (19:13- 4; 24-25), and He was in full control of its extent and timing (verses 22,24-25). The devastation included the four towns and even the soil on which they were built. It was a picture of complete devastation:

'All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows on it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger and in His wrath' (Deuteronomy 29:23).

The death of Lot's wife is tragic indeed. She died, it seems, within steps of safety. They had virtually arrived at the city of Zoar. While Lot hastened on, Mrs. Lot lingered. Perhaps her mother's heart was touched by the death of her sons and daughters, or it may have been the women's club or their new townhouse, or even the Ethan Allen furnishings they had just paid off. One thing is certain, her looking back differed from Lot's actions only in degree, not in kind. Her heart, like Lot's, was in Sodom. She lingered behind, then looked back for only a moment, but it was too late. The destruction meant for Sodom struck her as well, and only steps from safety and those she loved. Regardless of her motive, she directly disobeyed a clear command of the angelic messenger (cf. 19:17).

God Answers Abraham (19:27-29)

Verses 27-29 serve several purposes. First, they reveal the heart of Abraham in contrast to the self-interest of Lot. Abraham, like God, did not delight in wickedness nor in the destruction of sinners. Both had compassion on the righteous. Abraham had made his appeal to God. I do not think that he went to that same spot as the day

before in order to pray, but to watch God answer his prayers. There was no casual ‘what will be, will be’ attitude, but genuine concern over the outcome.

Secondly, these verses underscore the real reason Lot was spared. While a just God would not destroy the righteous with the wicked (18:25), the stress here is that ‘the prayers of a righteous man availeth much’ (James 5:16). It was Abraham’s faithfulness and not Lot’s which resulted in Lot’s deliverance. Humanly speaking, there was little reason for sparing Lot other than the character of God and the concern of Abraham over his fate.

(Adapted from URL: <https://bible.org/seriespage/20-city-councilman-caveman-what-difference-day-makes-genesis-191-38>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

On hearing the names Sodom and Gomorrah, most people think immediately of God's wrathful, fiery judgment that befell those cities. God's mercy, however, is also evident when we read of Lot's rescue. Lot acknowledged that he had been shown grace and mercy in being spared. Even so, he still wanted to negotiate regarding the place to which he could flee (Genesis 19:19). Rather than losing patience with Lot, the angel granted his request. The flaws in Lot's character seen in this account should not draw our attention away from the strength of God's character. Lot's behavior may puzzle us, but God's behavior shouldn't. The goodness of His mercy and the terror of His judgment both stand out. We are to be genuinely grateful that on the cross Jesus took the judgment that we deserved so that God could display His mercy to us. Like Lot, we too may be disturbed by the godless trends of our culture (compare 2 Peter 2:6-10) and the increasing contempt we see for the Bible and for Christian faith. But we can also become very attached to the pleasures of this world, which, as Jesus noted in the parable of the sower, can choke the spiritual life from us (Luke 8:14).

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Abraham and Lot, his nephew, finally settled in Canaan. Both men had many servants and livestock, and eventually a separation became necessary for land for their animals. Abraham allowed Lot to choose his relocation. Lot selected the valley with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, based on his observation of the lush land. But he failed to investigate the spiritual and moral climate. The people in the area proved to be extremely wicked.

The Visitors - Two divine beings visited Abraham to tell him God would destroy the evil cities, and then found Abraham's nephew at Sodom's city gate. When Lot noticed the newcomers, he prostrated himself before the angels and then opened his home to the visitors. Initially the angels refused, but Lot pressed the issue, fearing for their safety. The two angels finally agreed to go home with Lot and lodge there for the night.

The Immorality - While the guests were with Lot's family, the city's young and old men surrounded the house, demanding sexual pleasure from Lot's guests. Lot begged the Sodomites to refrain, instead offering his two virgin daughters. In that day, a host protected his guests at all cost, but his actions also highlighted men's low opinion of women, seeing them as dispensable. The vicious men mocked Lot and threatened to break down the door, but the angels struck them blind.

The Rescue - The messengers revealed that God would destroy the city, and Lot and his family must flee. Lot alerted others, but in the end, he stood alone with his wife and two daughters. The angels led the family to safety but warned them absolutely no looking back. The family escaped the heavenly destructive rain of sulphur and fire that destroyed everyone and everything in Sodom and Gomorrah, but Lot's wife glanced back and instantly became a pillar of salt.

God Remains the Same - Lot is not a model of godly behavior, but God rescued him as Abraham's nephew. Like all of us, Lot made poor choices and decisions, but even if God's children violate, ignore, and sometimes disobey the Holy Spirit's guidance and instructions, the Lord continues to forgive, extending to us His unwarranted grace and mercy.