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Genesis

Chapter 19 - God's Rescue Mission

Who Knows Best How to Save? (vs. 17-22)

Genesis 19:17-22: When they had brought them outside, one said, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away.” 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, for the disaster will overtake me and I will 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.” He said to him, “Behold, I grant you this request also, not to overthrow the town of which you have spoken. Hurry,

escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there.” Therefore the name of the town was called Zoar.

We read the narratives of these incidences, events, whether it be the flood or whether it be the tower of Babel or in this particular case, Sodom and Gomorrah. And we oftentimes focus on the judgment and the destruction in those events. Scripture does not do that. Scripture focuses on the saving. When you consider the flood, we're not introduced to the different ones that died in the flood. What we are focused on is Noah and his family. And all the way through, we see God dialoguing back and forth and ministering to his needs. God is saving. The malevolent forces that drive the human nature, God does not focus on. It is clear, according to Scripture, that man is really sick upstairs. Isaiah 1 says this in verse 5, he actually says, “Your whole head is sick.” Jeremiah will put

it this way in Jeremiah 17:9, “the heart is desperately sick.” So, we know that it's the nature of man to just go awry and clearly deteriorate. And as Paul will make mention of this to even Timothy, things will proceed from bad to worse, which is telling us that the world is not getting better. We're not building some euphoria or some utopia in our world, but we're actually making things worse. Why is that true? Well, it's just the nature of man. And Romans 1 says it so clearly, because man gets so full of himself that he starts thinking about how he can do things rather than listening to God. So, he begins to worship man rather than God. And we have that whole humanistic approach that comes in. And we find ourselves making these adjustments, perhaps at first, not major adjustments to what God says, but adjustments, nevertheless. And we begin to think that we're better than Him or more compassionate than Him or that we can do things that would actually bring more benefit than Him, which is obviously, clearly, the great lie of Satan. It

goes all the way back to the garden, “has God said,” causing us to question the validity of what God says as well as the veracity of what God says.

As we come to this passage, what we're seeing is a salvation, a saving; a saving of Lot in particular.

Unfortunately, we're pretty hard to save. It is bizarre that we actually resist salvation. And the fact that God has to oftentimes bring us to our knees or bring us to a point of seeing no other option; He then saves us. And in many respects, this particular passage is dealing with Lot's resistance to salvation. His whole family is resistant to moving out. And what has been being said all the way through is, as the angels begin to proclaim, “You need to get out of here!” I mean, people oftentimes say, “Well, God hasn't made it clear what I need to do.” Get out! I mean, what's so confusing about that? And of course, we read in 2 Corinthians 6, as you go into verse 14 and towards the end, don't be around those kinds of people. Psalm 1 says the same thing, “Get out from among them.”

Don't be a part of them. And what it's talking about is fellowship. What it's talking about is having things in common. What do you have in common with somebody that's going against your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ? Who do you have in common?

So, as we come to this, the declaration and the directive are very clear, “You need to get out of the city. You need to move.” Lot is still not moving and is resisting.

And so, we pick up in verse 17,

(Genesis 19:17) “When they had brought them outside...”

They actually had to pull them out by hand, as you look in verse 16, that there was a hesitation, the men seized their hand, they had to pull them out of the city, which is such a bizarre thought.

“When they had brought them outside, one said, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains...”

And it's pretty clear within the text, “Don't stay in the valley, okay? Go to the mountains.” I don't know if that's confusing to you, but that seems to make a lot of sense to me.

“... or you will be swept away.””

The point of the matter is very clear, “We're trying to protect you. We're trying to save you. We're trying to rescue you. This is what you need to do.” And as they bring them out of the city, they finally point them in the direction of the mountains.

When you think about the direction of the mountains in that particular region, there are a lot of cliffs involved and such as that. So, as you begin to take the first grouping, it wouldn't be long before you come to the point in which you'd hit another dip and then you're climbing back up and hit another dip. And in those dips, it becomes almost impossible to see the valley. Now, if you were to stay in the valley, it's very easy to see the things that are

happening in the valley, i.e. in the realm of Sodom and Gomorrah. So, in many respects, what we see is these angelic beings are actually giving warning, “You don't want to be in the valley, even though you may escape by virtue of the valley, because you still will be able to see, and the thing you don't want to do is turn back and look back,” which would be clearly the demise of Lot's wife. As you go into the Gospel of Luke, “remember Lot's wife.” She turned back. And when things are in vision, it's a lot easier to turn back to look at something, but when they're out of sight, hopefully more out of mind. And so, there was a kind of salvation, even in the direction of where they should go. Lot will resist this, and it's almost immediately he states in the next verse, “No, I can't do that. No, my lords!” And you see the great objection that he gives within the passage.

(Genesis 19:18) “But Lot said to them, “Oh no, my lords!

(Genesis 19:19) 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, for the disaster will overtake me and I will die.”

“For my own safety, I can't go to the mountain.” Now, he just got finished saying, “Go to the mountains for your safety.” But then he says, “But for my own safety, I can't go to the mountains.” The passage is really revealing the heart of Lot. And it's interesting, you see a tremendous amount of flattery within the text as he begins to not only flatter these angelic beings, but there's kind of a smooth talking, “Oh, you've been so wonderful. You've been so great to me. Your loving kindness has showered upon me. Now, if you really, really, really want to love me, don't let me go to the mountains.” And it's a little bit of a manipulation within the text. What we're seeing within the passage clearly is man's thinking through the process of what's best for himself. And really, that's what we've been seeing all the way through the text. I mean, at first, Lot tries to save the angels, which is a bizarre thought as

well, as when you consider even Peter wrestles with that, “No, no, I'm going to save you, God.” And who's going to save God, right? But we began to try to do the very things that God has never called us to do. And the things that God has called us to do, we just totally neglect. And here again, that's been the picture all the way through. I mean, You think about the day and age that we live in, we're trying to save the planet. Think about this. We're actually trying to save the planet. I had nothing to do with creating the planet. I just want to let you know that right from the start. But beyond that, how ludicrous it is to try to save the planet. People are worried about global warming. I oftentimes tell people, yeah, I've read 2 Peter 3, we're going to have global warming. The whole world's going to be caught up in fire and it's all going to go. But the thought is that we've got to do this, but then we neglect our children. So, we march around trying to save the planet while neglecting our children. The same thing is true when you consider that we march around in the

sense of trying to protect everything, and then we abort those very children that we should be saving. In other words, we're saying we're saving something while we're killing something. And it really is the process and the thought of man that he actually takes on things that he never should take on. And I was thinking about a lot of these things in which there's rioting on the streets and people are seeking to correct authority. I keep thinking in my head, what they should be doing is teaching their children how to respect authority. But once again, there's a great neglect in that way. And as Proverbs so clearly puts it in Proverbs 11, there's a way that seems right. And if you're to ask these people, "What are you doing?" They would say, "We're doing the right thing. We're doing the right thing." But the end thereof is death and there is destruction. Why? Because we pursue the things that we shouldn't and we neglect the things that we should. And as the passage goes on, clearly we see the neglect of his own children on behalf of trying to save the angels. He

puts the daughters out and he says, "Here, take them." And I'm going, "What are you sacrificing your children for? For the sake of looking like a savior? For the sake of looking grand?" And you see people doing that all the time, that there's neglect for the sake of perhaps maybe seeing yourself as a hero. And in that respect, what we begin to do is we begin to distort that which God has called us to do. It's a minor term in our thoughts. "Well, we're saving. Aren't we saving? That's what we're supposed to be doing." But God says, "That's not what you're supposed to be doing. That's My job."

I oftentimes think of the fact that, once again, and we talked about this last week, but we try to make our family happy. Well, here again, it's not your job. So, you're focusing on what's not your job instead of pointing to Christ, according to Ephesians 6, which is your job. Train them and teach them in the nurture and admonition of Christ. That's what you should be doing. But instead, what we're doing is we're going, "I just need to make my kids

happy.” Because of that, what you try to do is give your kid every worldly experience that is possible and every opportunity possible, which once again is not your job. God gives them the opportunities and places them where He wants them to give them those opportunities. Because as the psalmist so aptly puts it, “It’s He who made us and not we ourselves.” So, He knows what we were made for, and He places these in those particular positions. So, instead of really trying to place them in the grand opportunities of all the world that all the world has to offer, what you should be doing is pulling them out of places that are full of bad company. So, 1 Corinthians 15 says so clearly, “Don't be deceived. Bad company, though it looks like opportunity, corrupts good morals.” And people should be more concerned about those kinds of things than they should than about giving the experience of a lifetime or whatever. And as he so clearly put it in 2 Corinthians 14, “Get out. Get out from among their midst.”

Oftentimes, in this particular text, we're going to see Lot pursuing comfort. We're going to see him pursuing pleasure and ease and actually trying to do things that would be beneficial to him as he sees them. But once again, what he's going to do in regard to that is put his family's life in jeopardy.

So, the argument goes in verse 18, "I can't do that, I can't go that way."

And in verse 19, "Behold, if I've found favor in your sight, let me go where I think I will be safer than what you have told me."

Now, in verse 20, "Now, behold, I already have it mapped out." That's good. You have a plan and you know God tells you to do certain things and you go, "That's a good idea. I've got a little bit better plan. It's just a little bit of a turn, but nothing major."

So, he comes before God,

(Genesis 19:20) “Now behold, this town is near enough to flee to...”

“It's not going to be a hardship on me. I won't lose my breath. You know, I won't have to climb, how heights bother me, give me a headache.”

“Now behold, this town is near enough to flee to, and it is small...”

“So, there's not a lot of bad influence, just a small influence. I'll be safe there. This is where I'm going to be safe.” Actually, this particular town, if you go back, was actually named Bela, which the word actually comes from that which makes reference to destruction. So, you have a name like destruction. It's just a little destruction. You could actually translate it “ruin”. It's just a little ruin. How many times have you thought about just a little sin? It's just a little compromise. Let me just emphasize something as we go into this. There's nothing safe about a little compromise. There's nothing safe about a little ruin.

Nevertheless, there's this town, and in this particular text, they will actually rename the town. It won't be Bela anymore; it'll be Zoar, which means “little”. And once again, it's God's way of saying, “Yeah, I want you to remember this one.”

“... Please, let me escape there (is it not small?) ...”

“*Miṣ‘ār,*” which is where we get the word “Zoar”.

“... that my life may be saved.”

(Genesis 19:21) He said to him, “Behold, I grant you this request also, not to overthrow the town of which you have spoken.

(Genesis 19:22) Hurry, escape there...”

“Just get out. You're not moving. Just move out of here. Behold, I will grant you the request.”

“... for I cannot do anything until you arrive there.”

Therefore the name of the town was called Zoar (little).”

If you were to go to the background of this particular little town, once again, the whole area where the Canaanites are from the progeny of Ham, which is telling us that, once again, he found rest and found comfort in the grouping. And I oftentimes thought about the little turns that are made when you consider the disrespect of Ham towards his father. It was just a little disrespect, right? But what it creates is a city like Sodom and Gomorrah. Can you imagine that? These people come from somewhere. And you are, in many respects, like your parents. Scripture talks about the sins of the father will be visited upon the children. As Ezekiel makes reference to, you won't be punished for the sins of your father, but the sins of your father will visit you. In other words, the habits that your father has, the things that they did, the way that they spent their life will oftentimes be a draw to the way that you respond to things. It doesn't mean that it has to control you, but there will be some visitations. And it's ironic that oftentimes people find themselves saying, "I

hate these things about my father,” and then they turn around and they go, “I’m just like my father.” So, there is a visitation, which is interesting. But what Lot has done is he's taken himself out of the realm of his father, put himself in to the realm of somebody else's, and more specifically, into the realm of the world that would draw him away from the things of God. That he would continue to be drawn to that shows that not only does bad company corrupt, but bad company actually allures. And you begin to form patterns in the place that you live in. So, as we come to this, we realize this grand draw that we feel with with Lot in the passage.

All of these things to say this, that we have an individual that is clearly immersed into this lifestyle. When we see this, I can't help but think about how oftentimes I've argued with God about the things that He's doing in my life and how I try to reason out how something could be done just a little bit better, and I try to tweak it. What this passage is saying, probably more than any other passages,

is stop messing with God's word. If He says something, He means it. Do it exactly the way He says it. Now, once again, at this juncture, Lot is probably saying, "I think I dodged the bullet. I think I dodged the bullet in this respect. And I think that everything's going to be okay. And not only am I going to be safe, but I'm going to be safe in a place that I feel a little bit more comfortable with, because I feel comfortable in the realm of this sin. And so, it's not a lot, but it's a little bit, and I feel pretty good about that. So, everything's okay." And I think it's interesting that oftentimes we take these turns, and our initial thought is, "I dodged the bullet." I mean, it worked. We are kind of utilitarian in the sense that we think, as long as it works, then it must be okay. It must be okay. So, our thought is that, "Okay, we dodged the bullet. Maybe we didn't do everything God told us to do, but hey, it worked." Not really. You're not really safe. And I just really want to emphasize this within the passage.

If you look with me in Chapter 19, and once again, I cheated and looked right ahead. But if you read with me in verse 30 of Genesis 19,

(Genesis 19:30) “Lot went up from Zoar, and stayed in the mountains, and his two daughters with him; for he was afraid to stay in Zoar...”

Oh, maybe it wasn't as safe as he thought. Maybe it wasn't as wonderful as he thought.

Just to emphasize, Zoar, if you go back to Genesis 13, was one of the cities that allied themselves with Sodom and Gomorrah. So, they were strong allies with Sodom and Gomorrah, which means what? They live the same way. They're fighting for the same things. What Scripture begins to reveal to us is that it was just that compromise, that the same thing of Sodom and Gomorrah that he wanted a part of and he went to. What was the result? Well, the result is it's not going to be safe there either. Now, once again, initially, the thought is, “I dodged the

bullet.” But the end result is, no, you didn't. Because it's still coming at you from the place that you think was safe, the place that you thought was better.

There is an interesting passage in the Book of Amos, if you'll turn the room with me, in Amos 5. If you've ever read the prophetic Book of Amos, it's a great book.

Because what you have is basically a country bumpkin that God has called to minister to the hierarchy. And God has purposely done that. He actually is a day laborer. His statement to God is, “I don't know why You chose me. I'm not a prophet. I'm not a son of a prophet. I don't even know what I'm doing here.” And God says, “OK, I'm going to send you to the upper echelon. I'm going to send you up to the grand people. And you're going to tell them.” And I can imagine Amos is going, “Why?” And God says, “Because you have some common sense. The one thing they don't have is common sense.” So, everything that He tells Amos is just plain out common sense, just straightforward, because we don't want to confuse the

message. I mean, those academics have a way of just really twisting things, right?

So, Amos 5, if you look with me in verse 4,

(Amos 5:4) “For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel, “Seek Me that you may live.”

It's not a complicated call, is it?

He then goes on and says in verse 5,

(Amos 5:5) “But do not resort to Bethel And do not come to Gilgal, Nor cross over to Beersheba...”

All these cities, by the way, at one time were places where God met His people. Even when you consider Bethel, that means the “house of God.” We have synagogues named Bethel, because it just simply means “house of God.” But at this particular place, it became a place in which idolatry ran rampant. So, though initially it was a wonderful place to seek, it had been so corrupted that you don't want to go back. And you know, sometimes people think, “Well, it says Bethel.” You know, Gilgal was,

remember the place where they made the circle of the rocks to remember crossing over Jericho? So, you have these memorable spots that have all been corrupted. And what He's saying is, "I want you to look at the corruption that's there. You can't turn back to these places because of what they've become." And He lists those places.

"... For Gilgal will certainly go into captivity And Bethel will come to trouble."

Hosea actually says in Hosea 12:11 that they were offering in these particular areas sacrifices that were worthless to God. So, we know that.

Now, as you go on in the passage, it shows that they're incorrigible in the sense that they can't be corrected. In other words, different ones have come to them, and they began to adjudicate at the gates and tell them what the right thing to do is. They just hate those people telling them what the right thing is. They just hate that. It says that in verse 10.

(Amos 5:10) “They hate him who reproveth in the gate,
And they abhor him who speaks with integrity.”

“I just wish you wouldn't tell me to do the right thing.
That's just so annoying.”

So, because of this, in verse 13, the righteous men have stopped speaking. He told them to stop speaking; they did. So, now there's no longer a good voice.

But God begins to proclaim through Amos in Amos 5:14,
“Seek good and not evil, that you may live...”

Now, once again, it's just a very simple statement. Do good, not evil, and you'll live. It's pretty easy.

(Amos 5:15) “Hate evil, love good...”

So, once again, at this point, I haven't seen anything really extremely complicated. The thought is that they can, by virtue of their wealth, somehow dodge the bullet. And God, through Amos, says, “Don't think that you can do this.” “Oh, but I'm good at flattering. I can strike a bargain

with God.” And God sometimes goes, “Go ahead.” And we go, “See? I knew God would say, ‘Okay.’” Yeah, God's going to let you see what your plans reveal.

So, Amos begins to say something that probably he'd actually experienced or had seen out in the countryside, but he says in verse 18,

(Amos 5:18) “Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD,

For what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you?

It will be darkness and not light;

(Amos 5:19) As when a man flees from a lion...”

I can just see a guy go, “I think I beat the lion.”

“... And a bear meets him,

Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall

And a snake bites him.”

The thought is that I had a plan, and my plan was to maybe endeavor to save my own life by my own strength, my ability to run, outrun this lion, and God goes, “Don't

think that's going to be safe. And don't think that you can come in and say, 'I found a moment of rest.' And in that moment of rest, you're safe. You're not." Because you didn't do what God told you to do. And there is a time in which there's an arrogance. Things are okay. Things haven't panned out in a bad way. So, "I'm okay. I'm okay. I'm safe." And the passage is clearly revealing to us that you're not only not safe, but also difficult times are going to come. Worse times are going to come. Lot is going to find a lot of problems out of this. Lot had now shown compromise. And there are just several things that he did that were wrong. One is, of course, that he began to try to sacrifice his daughters for his own grandiosity. He wanted to look good. He wanted to look like a savior in front of other people. So, he sacrifices them in that. And then a little bit later on, he fears what his wife and his daughters perhaps are thinking. And he says, "You know, they are just really uncomfortable in the mountain range. So, what we're going to do is... Because I'm afraid that for my own

life, if I go to the mountains, maybe there are animals there, maybe we'll fall off a cliff or something." You're always safe when you obey God.

I hesitate about bringing this up. There is a word that's going around in which it sounds almost as if the medical group is trying to protect people from the church. "You go to church; you might get more disease. There are people that are sick at the church." That's true. There are people that are sick at the church. There's no safer place for you to be. Now, when Scripture says, "Seek first the kingdom of God," He doesn't stick anything else in there. I'm not saying that you should be unwise in things, but what I am saying is that we're letting people delegate what we should be doing rather than listening to God. And your focus should be on obeying Him. And look, if you and I die by doing the right thing, how wonderful is that? There is a great reward. But instead, what we try to do is figure out, "Well, how can I follow God and compromise, too?" And "I feel much safer if I do it this way." Of course, we saw

that all the time with COVID, sitting at home, pulling up the churches on the internet, “I feel so much safer. And hey, I'm worshipping too.” And the things that it was creating; we're still reaping the ramifications of those things that we were doing in those particular settings, even today, by virtue of the compromise that we had. And let me just emphasize, people weren't any safer. I can't think of one that we lost. The Lord was gracious. Were we sick? Did we have problems? Yes, complications, obviously. But as Peter will say, if you suffer for doing what's right, the glory of God rests on you. And how wonderful is that?

So, interestingly enough, we sacrifice the wrong things. And Lot was willing to sacrifice his daughters. Now, you have to ask yourself, what did that create? Well, if you follow the whole thing on, and we'll ultimately get to this passage towards the end of the book, but his daughters have relations with him, and then they have children by virtue of this. The Moabites and the Ammonites actually

come out of that particular realm. But let me just say this in that particular context, that the Moabites, as well as the Ammonites, worshiped gods. The Moabites, Chemosh, was the god that they worshiped, and the Ammonites worshiped Milcah; which is actually where we get the god Molech, which is the worship that involves sacrificing your children. Now, the thought is, "It was just one moment in which I sacrificed my child, put them on the altar for the sake of myself." But it became a worship that they began to follow, and a pattern that just penetrated the whole culture of the Moabites as well as the Ammonites. What Scripture is revealing to us is, don't be deceived. This is going to corrupt you. And that one turn, that slight turn; that one option is going to mess up everything. It'll proceed from bad to worse.

Romans 1 will kind of reveal that, and we made mention of this as well. But if you look with me in Romans 1, you can see the digression of humankind. And the question is, how did things get so bad?

It says in Romans 1:18,

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”

God is true. His way is right. We suppress that because it doesn't fit in, if you think about it, with our paradigm, our pattern of comfort. It's just not something that we like to do. We've lived another way of living, and as 2 Peter 3:16 makes reference, the unstable and the untaught distort Scripture. In other words, the “untaught” meaning the incorrigible, people that won't be taught, is actually what it's making reference to, and the unstable person is distorting Scripture to fit into their way of thinking because they don't want to leave their comfort zone. They don't want to leave the things that they do that they love so much. But the wrath of God is revealed against them because they suppress this truth, and I would say in many cases, by making little changes. Zoar. We would call them “insignificant” changes.

(Romans 1:19) “because that which is known about God is evident within them...”

You know what God wants inside of you. God has actually given you a conscience and a sense of right and wrong.

“... for God made it evident to them.

(Romans 1:20) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

It's impossible for you to say that some little idol that you built created the heavens and the universe. I mean, that's just not even close to smart.

(Romans 1:21) “For even though they knew God...”

They know the truth.

“... they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations...”

And this is where things go awry, right? “I think I have a better way. I think I know what to do.”

“... and their foolish heart was darkened.

(Romans 1:22) Professing to be wise, they became fools,

(Romans 1:23) and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man...”

I mean, if we're not going to do everything that God tells us, why don't we just go ahead and make our own god?

“... corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.”

I mean, you can just see the digression. “Well, we're just going to make the perfect man.” “No, let's go to a lizard,” you know? I don't know how we make that jump, but anyway.

(Romans 1:24) “Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

(Romans 1:25) For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

(Romans 1:26) For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

(Romans 1:27) and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”

People oftentimes say, “Well, God likes homosexuality.” I don't know how you can read a text like this and come up with that conclusion.

(Romans 1:28) “And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.”

Now, the interesting thing, once again here, is that what Scripture is actually telling you is that once you start turning to another way, you actually start building an idol. And that idol is only going to bring misery and destruction into your life. It'll only do that. Now, once again, you might say, “It's just a little destruction.” But it's going to grow. And it's going to grow to the point where it's going to be destructive in your life.

To give you a clear point, the word “wickedness,” sometimes translated “iniquity,” one of the passages that's made reference to is in Psalm 66. You probably remember the text, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Do you remember that particular verse? Well, he uses the word “*āven*,” which is the word that actually is often used to describe an idol. So, the way that the text can read is, “If I regard another idol in my

heart, the Lord will not hear me.” In other words, the point is, “I love something else.” It's like turning to God and going, “I love You more than almost anything, except...” And God goes, “I have nothing to talk to you about. And I'm not listening to what you have to say. Because until you love Me all, we have no relationship.” And so, Scripture is actually using that. It's very interesting, as you go on a little bit further, by the time you come to Hosea, there's actually a place called “Beth-āven,” which is “Beth,” the house of idols. And it's a place in which the Israelites worshiped. In other words, that turn, that sin, whatever it is, becomes an idol. Now you say, “Well, no biggie, no problem. I've followed this idol; I've dodged the bullet.” God says, “You don't understand what the bullet is.” The bullet is the destruction of your own life. And what's bizarre is, if you look at this, every time it makes reference to the fact that we abandon God and turn from His way to our own way, things go awry in your life. And let me say this. There's not one idol; there's

not one sin that you can pursue that will make you a better person. Let me put it in another way. There's not one sin that you can pursue that will not make you hateful. If you find yourself being angry and hateful and spiteful and vengeful and upset at people, do you know what that is? That's an idol. That's what's caused you to go there. And at first, I know you said it was just a little one.

But listen to the way this reads in verse 28,

(Romans 1:28) “And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer...”

Well, that was the problem, wasn't it? God said, “Do this.” And you go, “Eh, maybe He's right, maybe He's wrong.”

“... God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.”

In other words, they jumped out of their realm. They started doing things that they were not responsible for. They neglected doing things that God told them to do.

And before long, they had already built their own idol. I mean, if part of saving the world is offering my own kids on the altar, hey, why don't I just sacrifice my kids? Why don't we just go to the god of Molech? I mean, God calls upon you to put your children on the altar, but what does He do? He puts His own on instead.

“And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

(Romans 1:29) being filled with all unrighteousness...”

Watch how this happens,

“... wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit...”

You want to know why Sodom and Gomorrah was such a horrible place to live? Because they abandoned God. We oftentimes talk about the homosexuality and all the things that were involved in that, and that's horrific in and of itself, but any sin is going to create this kind of heart.

Because sin by its very definition is selfishness. And selfishness by its very definition is hateful. It just is.

“being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,

(Romans 1:30) slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil...”

It's just like, “Let's see, is there something bad I can do? Let's think of something new bad I can do.” You know, people are just trying to figure out more bad things that they can do.

“... disobedient to parents,

(Romans 1:31) without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful.”

They don't even know how to show mercy. Why is that? Because you went the selfish route. You said, “I know better than God. I'm going to make the decisions, and I'm going to make the decisions that are most comfortable to

me.” Even in that passage with Lot, I don't see him turning to his family and going, “Hey, gang, what do you think will be best?” He goes, “I don't like mountains.” And he makes those decisions based on how he feels, and what begins to ensue? Well, all kinds of problems. When you think about the things that we focus on, we're clearly focused on the wrong things, trying to do the right thing that we have in our own mind, instead of just reading the Bible. We live in a time in which we're so focused on physical safety. I don't know if you've noticed that or not. I mean, my life is in God's hands. I mean, clearly, I don't think I should run out in the middle of the street while the traffic is going. But people are so immersed in physical safety and well-being. Paul will say this in Philippians 1:20, that Christ would be exalted, whether by life or by death. Where's the concern about physical safety? We get ourselves so immersed in that kind of stuff, and we're going, “I've got to make myself live longer.” You don't control that. What you should be doing is proclaiming the

gospel, ministering to people, that Christ would be exalted. Here's one; keep your behavior excellent. That's actually something that you could do. We try to distort and twist God's word to make it fit into our comfortable paradigm, but the problem is that we're just not doing simply what He says. I mean, I just listed a few simple things. Love God above all else. Are you doing that? Seek God first. Walk humbly before your God. Live by faith. Here's one. Fear not. Did you know that was a command? It's actually a command. Now, listen to the simplicity of that. "Fear not." I wonder what God means by that? I mean, Philippians will put it, "Be anxious for nothing." So, what are you worried about? And why are you focusing on all those concerns and all those worries? You know, if you seek first the kingdom of God, will He not supply all your needs according to His riches and glory? Will not God take care of you? A very simple, simple mandate that God has given us, forgive. You know what we'd rather do? We'd rather take antidepressants than forgive somebody.

We would. We tell God, “Just let me hang on to this one little hate and I'll take some pills for it, and everything will be okay.” And God goes, “After a while, guess what? You're not going to like Zoar either. Quit trying to figure out how you're going to do things.” The simplicity of just obeying Scripture; just get out. Stop doing that. Stop sinning, Paul would say. How clear is that?

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today. We just ask You to work within our hearts. The fact of the matter is, Lord, we have all kinds of thoughts about the way things should be and how we can fix our lives, how we can fix even other people's lives. And yet, what we find ourselves doing is compromising what You tell us, and in so doing, bringing greater problems in our life; idols, that began to draw us away from You and cause all kinds of misery and hurt and

emptiness and pain. Things that we didn't think were that big become monsters and destructive in our lives.

A simple lesson as we look at this particular incident with Lot, and that is, quit compromising. Do everything that God tells you to do. Don't complicate your life by trying to figure out what He means by this. It's very clear what He says. And obey Him. If you'll trust and obey, there's no other way to be happy in Jesus.