

Genesis 19:15–38 — While He Lingered

Lot's Reluctance, God Remembered Abraham, Lot's Wife, and the Origin of Moab and Ammon

Scripture Reading: Genesis 19:15–38; Jude 7; Psalm 83:6–9

“And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.”

“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.” (Genesis 19:29)

Reluctance: The One Word That Characterizes Lot's Departure

If one word characterizes the first part of this passage, it is reluctance. They laid hold of his hand and the hand of his wife and the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful, and they brought him forth and set him outside the city. They had to take hold of them. There was no willing, rapid, eager departure from a place of judgment. There was lingering, resistance, and finally physical compulsion. This is what the self-pleasing walk comes to: a man whose heart is so attached to the city that even the announced coming of divine judgment cannot move him to go quickly and willingly.

We know from 2 Peter 2:8 that Lot was a righteous man whose soul was vexed daily with the lawless deeds of those around him. That spiritual reality was real. But practically, looking at the narrative, you would not know it. His son-in-law thought he was mocking when he warned them of judgment. He argued with the

angels about where to flee. His heart hung not on obedience but on the creature comforts of city life. Spiritual life and spiritual fruitfulness are not the same thing, and worldly attachment can reduce a righteous man to practical uselessness for God.

Only a Little City: The Reasoning of the Carnal Mind

Lot's argument for Zoar is a remarkable specimen of how the carnal mind in a believer can reason. O not so, my lord — he is arguing with the Lord's representatives. He says he cannot escape to the mountain lest some evil take him and he die. That is just talk — because the mountain is exactly where he ended up afterward, and lived. His heart was hanging on city life, and he needed a reason to justify keeping some of it. Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one. Is it not a little one? He says it twice for emphasis. And my soul shall live. The convenience is what the worldly Christian is seeking, and the smallness of the compromise he is proposing is how he rationalizes it.

What does the size of the city have to do with anything? Only one thing: it makes the compromise seem negligible. If I can't have the big thing I wanted, at least let me have this little thing. That is the spirit of it. But Zoar was under the same judgment as Sodom; it was only spared because Lot asked for it. The principle it embodied was no different. And it was not long before Lot feared to dwell in Zoar as well, because the same wickedness that pervaded Sodom pervaded all these cities of the plain. Jude 7 confirms it: Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh. The worldly compromise that seems little turns out not to be a refuge at all.

God Remembered Abraham: The Intercession That Prevailed

Verse 29 is one of the most striking verses in the passage: 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. It does not say God remembered Lot. It says God remembered Abraham. The man who was remembered was the intercessor, not the one on whose behalf intercession was made. And the sending of Lot out was the result of that remembrance.

This is not to say that Abraham's intercession accomplished nothing. The verse is there specifically to tell us that it did. Abraham had stood before the Lord and pleaded on behalf of the righteous who might be in Sodom. His requests went down as far as ten. There were not ten. But there was one, and the one was preserved. Not because of what was in the one, but because of the one who stood before the Lord on his behalf. The intercessor was remembered, and the benefit went to the one prayed for. The place where Abraham rose early to see the judgment — the place where he stood before the Lord — was the place of intercession, and it was remembered.

Lot's Wife: Looking Back

His wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. The Lord Jesus said in the New Testament, remember Lot's wife. He did not say remember Noah's wife. Noah's wife went in whole-heartedly; her heart was not left behind in the old world. Lot's wife went out physically but her heart remained in Sodom. Looking back was the outward expression of an inward attachment. She is a warning against the condition of the one who leaves the world in body while leaving the heart behind.

And then there was no going back to Abraham for Lot afterward. Abraham was a separated man, a man who had an altar and a tent, who called on the name of the Lord. Lot had had occasion to see what that meant, and to receive the benefit of it when Abraham rescued him earlier. But when Lot comes out of Sodom, he does

not seek out Abraham. He ends up in a cave. There was a choice, and the cave was preferred to the fellowship of the separated man of God. That says much about the state of Lot's soul.

Moab and Ammon: What the Self-Pleasing Walk Produces

The final outcome of Lot's history in the cave, the daughters, and their incestuous sons Moab and Ben-Ammi — father of Ammon — is not recorded for salacious purposes but for prophetic instruction. God is providing here the origin of the nations that would become the persistent ancient enemies of Israel. Moabites and Ammonites recur throughout the Old Testament as hostile neighbors, adversaries in close proximity who knew the truth and rejected it. Those who are nearest to the truth and reject it are often those most vehemently opposed to those who walk in it. The nearness produces an urgency of opposition — they must suppress what they know, and the suppression takes the form of hostility.

Psalm 83 names the confederacy of nations that will come against Israel at the end: Moab, Hagarites, Philistines, and the others. The Old Testament gives us the origins of all these peoples, and the Lord who knows every genealogy will recognize them even when archaeologists and anthropologists cannot fully trace the lines. The great Melchizedek priest, king and priest at once, will have perfect knowledge of all genealogies when he takes his throne. The ancient enmities of Israel's enemies trace back to sin, self-will, and departure from God, and they will come under divine judgment at last.

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.