

Genesis 19:
The Sin of Sodom

I. Invitatory

A. 19:1 *The two angels came to Sodom in the evening;*

B. Now the men are called angels. This can indicate two things

1. The theophany of Chapter 18, like all theophanies, defies simple descriptions. Do we have here, men, angels, God? Yes, all three. Confusion is a common feature of theophanies. Hence the confusion descriptions

a. Gen 32:24 *And Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day....28 Then he said, "Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Tell me, I pray, your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved."*

2. Angels as messengers of God are frequently confused with God and sometimes interchangeable with him.

a. Rv 19:9 *And the angel said to me...., "These are true words of God." Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God."*

b. Hosea 12:4 *He [Jacob] strove with the angel and prevailed, he wept and sought his favor. He met God at Bethel, and there God spoke with him-- the LORD the God of hosts, the LORD is his name:*

C. Hence we are left to ponder the true identities of these two

1. Are they two of the three "men" we encountered earlier in Gen 18?

2. Are they two separate angels, carrying out God's will?

3. Are they the Son and the Holy Spirit?

II. Invitation

A. *and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed himself with his face to the earth, 2 and said, "My lords, turn aside, I pray you, to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the street." 3 But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.*

B. We're back to Lot again and so we know that there is trouble at hand!

- C. Lot, though he is sitting at the gates of Sodom and has pitched his tent toward Sodom is presented here as a virtuous man. His virtue is portrayed in terms of his hospitality. Hospitality was an important and highly valued virtue in ancient Israel. This is perhaps due to the precariousness of life in the ancient world. A place to stay at night could well be a matter of life and death. It grew quite cold at night even in the summer (due to low humidity). Further, food and drink were not easily available to the traveler as today. Lastly, crime was a real problem if safe shelter were not found. (Notice that it is unthinkable to Lot that they spend the night in the street). Thus, hospitality was a great obligation in the ancient world.
- D. Despite the problems described earlier, Lot is here portrayed as a righteous man. Abraham in the last chapter also argued on his behalf, calling him righteous. (Gen 18:23ff). Curious, but also a source for hope for us! Thankfully, despite our own struggles with sin God can still number us among the righteous.

III. Iniquity

- A. ***4 But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; 5 and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." 6 Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, 7 and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. 8 Behold, I have two daughters who have not known man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." 9 But they said, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came to sojourn, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door.***
- B. Here is a shocking passage of perversion and of peril.
1. The perversion is evident in the fact that the men of Sodom demand to have the visiting men that they may “know” them. To “know” in the biblical sense is to have sexual union (*cf* Gen 4:1, 25). Thus these men demand homosexual union with the visitors.
 2. The peril is evident in that Lot is expected to provide protection to his visitors. This was an essential norm of hospitality. It also helps explain (though it does not excuse) Lot’s preference to send out his virgin daughters¹ rather than expose his visitors to perversion. The basic point of the offer is to illustrate that the perversion of homosexuality was so abhorrent that it would even be better to have your daughters raped. Not that such a thing was OK but that’s how awful the proposed solicitation was. Perhaps, but nothing can excuse what Lot proposed, it was cowardly and unjust. Yet still Lot retains his status as a righteous man!

¹These daughters as we shall see are hardly paragons of virtue! Perhaps because Lot did not respect them and thus they never learned self-respect?

- C. The men persist in their perverse demands and even accuse Lot of being judgmental of them! This is not uncommon of the radicalized in the “Gay rights” movement who accuse those who do not agree with their life style of being judgmental, homophobic and the like.
- D. Lot is now in peril of homosexual rape and the crowd closes in on him.
- E. Homosexual activity is clearly condemned here and portrayed as abhorrent. Some quotes from the catechism may help us strike a proper balance:
 1. *2357 Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered."²...Under no circumstances can they be approved.*
 2. *2358 The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. They do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.*
 3. *2359 Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.*

IV. Intervention

- A. ***10 But the men put forth their hands and brought Lot into the house to them, and shut the door. 11 And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves groping for the door.***
- B. The two visitors now rescue Lot.
- C. Further they strike with blindness the men. The text is somewhat archaic in its translation. A more modern translation puts it this way: *Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness so that they could not find the door.*

V. Instruction

- A. ***12 Then the men said to Lot, "Have you any one else here? Sons-in-law, sons,***

²Cf. Gen 19:1-29; Rom 12:4-27; 1 Cor 6:10; 1 Tim 1:10.

daughters, or any one you have in the city, bring them out of the place; 13 for we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it." 14 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."

- B. The instructions are clear. Lot is warned in response to Abraham's prayer on his behalf.

VI. Inaction

A. *But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting. 15 When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city." 16 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 forth and set him outside the city. 17 And when they had brought them forth, they said, "Flee for your life; do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley; flee to the hills, lest you be consumed."*

- B. They do not take the warning seriously. Sinners rarely do take warnings seriously.
1. Ps 10:4 *In the pride of his countenance the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, "There is no God." His ways prosper at all times; thy judgments are on high, out of his sight; as for all his foes, he puffs at them. He thinks in his heart, "I shall not be moved; throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity."*
 2. Ps 10:13 *Why does the wicked renounce God, and say in his heart, "Thou wilt not call to account"?*
 3. Ps 94:3 *O LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult?...7 and they say, "The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive." 8 Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise? 9 He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?*
 4. Sirach 5:4 *Say not I have sinned, yet what has befallen me? For the Lord bides his time. But of forgiveness be not overconfident adding sin upon sin. ...Delay not your conversion to the Lord, put it not off from day to day for mercy and justice are alike with him.*

- C. Again, largely due to Abraham's prayer, the angels literally grab them and take them out of the city. Lot, his wife and daughters are being spared in spite of themselves.

VII. Intercession

A. ***18 And Lot said to them, "Oh, no, my lords; 19 behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life; but I cannot flee to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me, and I die. 20 Behold, yonder city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there -- is it not a little one? -- and my life will be saved!" 21 He said to him, "Behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. 22 Make haste, escape there; for I can do nothing till you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. 23 The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar.***

B. In English we have an expression: "Head for the hills!" as a way of saying get away far and get away fast. Here however we see that Lot is too lazy to go to the hills. He pleads for a closer little town to be spared so he won't have to go far. Thus he is lazy in getting away from evil.

C. Here we have a symbol. Lot should never have pitched his tent near Sodom. Now he has become accustomed to evil and is slow to part company with it. So it is us who often are slow in parting with sin. We want to part slowly with it, no go far and only halfway leave. Lot symbolizes the sloth of the sinner.

VIII. Intervention

A. ***24 Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; 25 and he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.***

B. Here is the promised destruction.

C. In class we fire and brimstone imagery.

IX. Impenitence -

A. ***26 But Lot's wife behind him looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.***

B. Just like Lot, his wife cannot quite turn away from sin. She mourns over it's loss and turns back.

C. Remember conversion means to turn away. Reversion and backsliding means to turn back and go in the wrong direction.

X. Investigation -

A. ***27 And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD; 28 and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.***

B. Abraham looks to see God's just judgement. Does he despair over Lot or is he

clear that God heard his prayer? His immediate reaction to the scene is not clear.

XI. Integrity -

- A. **29 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 dwelt.**
- B. But God did hear Abraham's prayer and Lot is spared.
- C. Even when we are unfaithful God remains faithful
 - 1. 2 Tim 2:12 *if we endure, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful -- for he cannot deny himself.*

XII. Incest-

- A. **30 Now Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar; so he dwelt in a cave with his two daughters. 31 And the first-born said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the earth. 32 Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring through our father." 33 So they made their father drink wine that night; and the first-born went in, and lay with her father; he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. 34 And on the next day, the first-born said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve offspring through our father." 35 So they made their father drink wine that night also; and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. 36 Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. 37 The first-born bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. 38 The younger also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the Ammonites to this day.**
- B. Another shocking story. Several lessons are learned here:
 - 1. It's one thing to get the sinner out of Sodom. It was another thing to get Sodom out of the Sinner.
 - 2. Lot's was spared the full consequences of his choice to pitch his tent toward Sodom. But not the full consequences. His wife was lost and his daughters are corrupted.
 - 3. The sin of Lot goes not only to his daughters but also to his descendants for the Moabites and the Ammonites would be future enemies of Israel. Sin snowballs.