



BACK TO THE BIBLE SERIES: Ignite Your Faith: Genesis 12-25 wk. 3

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Message Title: Faith and Compromise pt. 1

Release Date: Wednesday, 8/14/19

Last week we opened talking about two vacation packages, vacation package A is really everything you could ever want in a vacation and it, it's really the best of the best and vacation package B is like your worst nightmare and everybody that's taken it, it's been a disaster. And if you have the choice between those two packages, it seems like a no-brainer which one to choose. And we said that's kind of a picture of the choice we have to either pursue this faith relationship with God and experience everything that God wants for us or to choose this path of destruction and experience the consequences of that. And again, that seems like kind of a no brainer. It seems fairly obvious which path is the path to choose. Yet Jesus said very clearly the majority of people that ever live will choose the path of destruction. They will choose vacation package B and they will suffer the consequences of that.

Well, that's really what Genesis 18 and 19 are about. Genesis 18 was a look into the intimate friendship, the intimate relationship that Abraham has with God, and it was so intimate that it was kind of like having God at the dining room table and a reminder, this is the God for whom nothing is too wondrous. It's the God of the impossible, all the implications of dwelling in an intimate relationship with the God of the universe. It's really a beautiful picture of what God wants. But now in Genesis chapter 19, we get a very different picture. We get a picture as we track the story of Lot of what happens when we choose the ways of this world.

Now it's true that Genesis 19 is about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but really what we track through the story or who we track through the story as a person, it's Abraham's nephew Lot. In the language of the New Testament, we would say that Lot is a carnal Christian because the New Testament says he was a righteous man and again, righteousness not based on his performance but based on a faith relationship with God. So somewhere along the way, Lot entered into this covenant relationship with God, but in the language of the New Testament, he was living according to the flesh. He was living according to the world. And so, it's really a picture of this carnal Christian living in the world and the consequences of that.

Turn to Genesis 19 and I have to tell you going in, this is one of the darkest miserable chapters in all of the Bible. Just before we get into chapter 19, it's important to remember Lot's progression to where we find him in this chapter. You remember in chapter 13 of Genesis, Abraham and Lot, the herdsman, and the people were in conflict so they needed to separate and Abraham said to Lot, you can choose any ground that you want and it's yours and I'll go somewhere else. And we're told that Lot looked over, down into the valley and the text specifically says that it looked like Egypt. And so, he said, that's what I want. The writer's very careful to say that when Abraham and Lot went down into Egypt, there was something that got into Lot's heart to convince him that Egypt is where it's at, that Egypt is what's going to make me happy, Egypt's is what's going to fulfill me and it's a picture of, of this world and what this

world offers. And so, when Lot had a choice, he looked around and he looked down into Sodom and he said, that looks like Egypt. That's where I'll go. A couple of verses later it tells us that Lot then moved from looking at Sodom to pitching his tent down in the valley outside of Sodom. By the time we get to chapter 14 we find out Lot was living in Sodom and by the time we get to chapter 19 we find out he is living in Sodom and he is in a position of authority or respect seated in the gate of the city.

One other question that I'd invite you to just kind of think about as we move into this story is what do you think Lot was looking for when he decided, I'm going to go to Sodom? Do you think Lot got up one day and said, you know, I think I would like to be miserable? I think I would like to destroy my life so I'm going to Sodom. I don't think that's what was in his mind. As a matter of fact, I think it was just the opposite. Lot said, I want to be happy, I want to be fulfilled, I want to experience all that life has to offer, but he had become convinced that the route to Sodom was where that was found. Keep that in mind because we're going to raise the question, is that what he found there? With all that in mind, let's see what the text says.

Genesis 19 verse one, "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."

There are several things to notice there. One is, as I mentioned, we find Lot in the entrance to the city, seated at the gate. If you're not aware of this, in those ancient cultures, that was a position of authority. That's where they held court. That's where many of the significant decisions were made. That would be symbolic of the fact that he was what we might call a city father, so he had achieved a level of importance in the city of Sodom. But I would suggest to you that that was really a mirage that was really a false sense of authority and importance because as we're going to see as we go into the story, Lot may have thought that he kind of was a big shot in the city, but we're going to find out he had nothing. He thought he had achieved a level of status, but he really hadn't. It was meaningless as we'll see in just a minute.

When you read the first three chapters, there's no question that the writer is begging us to make a comparison. When we compare, we notice both Abraham and Lot received visitors, special visitors, these angels. We also noticed that Abraham was seated in the doorway of his tent. Lot was seated in the doorway or the gateway of the city. We see that both men invited the strangers into their house and offered to wash their feet and offered to feed them a feast. So, the similarities are very obvious, but there's also some differences that we notice.

One of the most obvious differences would be that when Abraham had these visitors, there were three of them and one of them was God Himself in the flesh. And of course, that's the heartbeat of chapter 18, it's this intimacy that Abraham had with God. But when you get into chapter 19 there's just two, the two angels. Notice as chapter 18 ends, it says the Lord departed from Abraham and there's kind of an assumption He's going to go catch up with the angels. But that is not the case. It's as if the writer is communicating that while God was very personal and intimate with Abraham, He did not have that relationship with Lot and He simply would not go into Sodom. And so, you have the presence of God very real and personal in chapter 18. and you have really an absence of the presence of God in that way in chapter 19 and there's a, there's an imagery there, or a picture.

It's also interesting that when Abraham invited the guests into his home, they gladly received the invitation. When Lot invited the angels into his home, they said, no, no, we don't want to come, and it was only after Lot kind of begged them, "Please spend the night," that they accepted the invitation. Again, I think it's just a picture of the difference between Abraham's intimacy and where Lot was at in his life.

There's one other thing worth noting that's kind of subtle, but it is certainly there. Both Abraham and Lot offered the guests a feast. Now maybe in chapter 18 you wonder why is there so many details about the feast? I mean we're really told what the menu was. They served steaks, they served homemade bread, and there's several things that it mentions indicating this really was an all-out feast in Genesis 18. But what's said of the feast in Genesis 19, it was a piece of unleavened bread. I think what's being suggested here is what a feast is, is relative to what you've experienced. In other words, maybe to Lot and the people of Sodom that was a feast, but if you had just come from a night with Abraham, that was no feast because that is the way it works.

There's lots of people in our world today that are absolutely convinced they're experiencing a feast. Man, they're living it up. They're getting what this world has to offer, they think they've got life by the tail. In their mind, that's all they've known. That's a feast. But to the people who have experienced a feast with God, they realize that's no feast. What the world offers is a piece of bread compared to what God offers, and I think that's the imagery there. The angels are sitting there thinking, Lot, I hate to tell you this, but this is no feast. We just had a feast.

Well, the story goes on verse four, *"Before they laid down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter, and they called to Lot and they said to him, where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them."*

Now the story's getting pretty ugly right here. It's a matter of fact, the language is actually pretty graphic. It's not one or two men. It's every man from every corner of the city, both the young and the old. They come as kind of a mob and basically what they say is Lot, we want your two male visitors. We want to gang rape them. I mean, that's basically what they're saying here. So, Lot responds, verse six, *"But Lot went out to them at the doorway and shut the door behind him and said, please, my brothers do not act wickedly. Now behold I have two daughters who have not had relations with men. Please let me bring them out to you and do to them whatever you like, only do nothing to these men in as much as they have come under the shelter of my roof. But they said, stand aside. Furthermore, they said this one came in as an alien and already he's acting like a judge. Now we will treat you worse than them. So they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door, but the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door and they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great so that they wearied themselves trying to find the doorway."*

This is an ugly mob scene that is emerging. It's ... Lot steps out onto the porch. And I think what you have here is this picture of Lot imagining he has a position of authority. He sits at the gate, so he's going to step out on the porch and he's going to say, brothers, there'll be none of this tonight. But as soon as he says that, it becomes obvious that whatever position or status or authority he thought he had, he realized he had none. As a matter of fact, these men became so offended, so outraged by his comments

that they were going to do him in. It's going to be worse for Lot than it's going to be for these two, but basically, they're going to have all of them. And so, the angels reach out and they grab Lot and they pull him in the door, and they strike these men with blindness basically to protect Lot's household.

You would think at that moment Lot would realize that he had made a disastrous decision to ever live in Sodom. Is that true? We'll see in just a minute, but one of the glimpses, maybe one of the most powerful glimpses into the heart of Lot is his man-made solution to the problem. Basically, what he said is, I'll tell you what, I have to virgin daughters. These would have been young adolescent girls, his own daughters. I'll give them to you. You can do whatever you want with them. Just leave these two visitors alone. There's no question that what they would've done to them would have been a gang rape and very likely would have killed these two girls.

Now, what has to possess a father to do that? I think it's a picture of just what had happened to Lot's heart - where he had gone and what he had become. I mean, I'm a father of three daughters, I can't even begin to enter into the depravity of that thinking. I would gladly die a thousand deaths before I would ever subject my girls to anything remotely like that. But it's a picture of Lot. It's where he's gone and what he's become and it's very, very sick. I can't even imagine how terrified those girls must have been.

Well, the story goes on verse 12, *"Then the men said to Lot, whom else have you here? A son-in-law and your sons and your daughters, 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. 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 this city. But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting."*

It's hard to even imagine what this would be like to hear the warning from these angels that God is going to destroy this city and in an act of mercy and compassion, he says, I'm going to give you the chance to go talk to your family and to warn them to get out of the city before I destroy it. So, you can imagine the urgency in Lot's heart as he goes out and he finds his children. And to realize at that moment of truth, when more than any other time in his life, he needed the ability to influence his children to save their lives, and to realize at that moment he had no influence over them whatsoever. They looked at him and they laughed. They looked at him and they thought he was joking. The bottom line is that Lot, because of what he had become, and I think you'd get a glimpse of that in how he offered his daughters, in what he had become to them, he no longer had even the slightest influence over his own family.

Contrast that to Abraham in chapter 17 who was able to influence not only his family, but hundreds of men to take the sign of the covenant because they so respected Abraham and Abraham's relationship to his God. The contrast is absolutely striking between Abraham and Lot.

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Arnie: Bryan, amazing comparisons between Lot and Abraham and the righteous and wicked paths in this story. First of all, is there any difference between a carnal Christian and a nonbeliever?

Bryan: I think there's all the difference in the world. A carnal Christian is somebody who's been born again, they're destined for glory, but they're living according to the flesh. Paul refers to them in Corinthians as being carnal. That's what it means, fleshly. And he says they're just infants. But even that

terminology is - you are a child, you're born again, but you're still an infant. You haven't grown up yet. So you get to Paul in Romans, he draws a real distinction between those who are in the flesh, which are unbelievers -that's your nature -and those who walk according to the flesh, which are believers in Christ, but still living like they're still in the flesh. So, unbelievers are lost. Carnal Christians are saved. They're just not living like it.

Cara: Are they the ones he says that are on milk then?

Bryan: Yeah, right. Just haven't grown up yet.

Cara: So, what comes first then, the weak faith or the compromise?

Bryan: Well, it's a little bit of chicken-egg, but I would say weak faith comes first because it's a failure to believe and so we take matters into our own hands and then we compromise. So if we go back to our James' study, it starts with something conceived in our minds before it gives birth to the action, which would be the compromise. But it is a cycle. One feeds the other, you can get in a downward spiral and then it just feeds on itself.

Cara: Right. Well there seems to be a progression in Lot's life then. Could you review that?

Bryan: Yeah. It's very interesting the way that text presents this over multiple chapters, but it starts with Lot looking at the land, looking at Sodom and even references the fact that it looked like Egypt. So part of that's on Abraham for taking Lot down there and kind of falling in love with Egypt and he's looking for land that looks like Egypt. There's a message there. Then he pitched his tent towards Sodom. Next thing you know, he moved into Sodom and I think in this story he has a position of authority. I think that's fairly obvious in the story in Sodom. So, it's a step at a time.

Arnie: It seems like Lot had no influence on his family at all.

Bryan: Yeah, that's a frightening moment. Just imagine everything's on the line and you're trying to convince your son-in-law's, we need to get out of Dodge. And they laugh at you. They laugh in your face and I think it reflects they had no respect for Lot and his influence in their lives. You contrast that to Abraham in chapter 17 where he convinced all these men to be circumcised as adults. You think of that influence and then Lot didn't even have influence with his own son-in-law's. But it's also, you know, you read the story, they all had to be literally dragged out of the city. I mean, it says the angels had to drag them out and it's like how connected to Sodom were they? But you also have like Eli in First Samuel that has no influence on his sons, whom God judges and even talks about Samuel's sons do not walk in his ways. It's a familiar but sad story.

Cara: It just kind of shows you in modern times these men who aren't in the head of their household, they're not guiding and showing their families.

Bryan: Yeah, whatever's happening, they're not influencing their own family.

Cara: Yeah. So, do you think Lot's disregard for his own daughters impacted then those things that happen later in life?

Bryan: Yeah, so it's hard to say for sure because we don't have a lot of the story, but I think it reflects deeper issues and values in Lot's life that had to have been manifested at home that were part of the bigger story that defined these girls. We know for a fact that our family of origin has a powerful influence in our lives. So, you'd have to think the environment that Lot created had a lot to do with the behavior of these girls.