



BACK TO THE BIBLE SERIES: By Faith We Live: Genesis 12-25 wk. 3

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So, the story goes on verse 15, *"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."* I have to tell you when I read that sentence, but he hesitated, it's just absolutely stunning. Wouldn't you think all that he's been through, he would be packed and ready to flee this cesspool and to escape. I mean the night before these people had gathered at his house and they wanted to kill him. He should have realized, man, I am in so far over my head. I have got to get out. They get up in the morning and the angels clearly have a sense of urgency. Get Out. We're going to destroy this city and Lot couldn't bring himself to leave and you have to ask the question, what is in the heart of this man that he still doesn't get it?

I have to tell you, over the years, I've met far too many people like Lot. People whose lives are in absolute disarray because of the choices they've made. Their marriage is a disaster. Their children are a disaster. Their lives are a disaster. Their relationships are a disaster. I mean, everything is just about as bad as it can be. And you would think if there was ever anybody that's ready to say something's got to change, it would be this person. And so many times just like Lot they're unwilling to change. Lot has --he didn't want to leave Sodom.

Over the years of my ministry, I've spent a lot of time with teenagers, college, junior high, senior high and one of the things I've noticed is there are so many who are involved in alcohol and sex and all this stuff this world has to offer. They're really doing the party scene and they are trying so hard to convince themselves and the people around them that they are happy. They are trying so hard to say, man, life is a party. Everything's great, but all you have to do is look into their eyes and there is so much pain and there is so much misery. As a matter of fact, talk to them for 30 minutes and pretty soon the walls come down and you realize this person is absolutely miserable and you would think at that point they would be willing to say, I have got to change something. To realize that God has offered such a radically different alternative, such a radically different option that is so filled with joy and meaning and fulfillment, but like Lot they hesitate. They hold on. They just keep going down that path of destruction.

Verse 16, *"So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the Lord was upon him, and they brought him out and put him outside the city."* They literally grab them by the hands, and they drag them out of the city before they destroy it. *"And it came about when they had brought them outside, that one said, escape for your life. Do you not look behind you, do not stay anywhere in the valley, escape to the mountains lest you be swept away? But Lot said to them, oh no, my lords. Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight. You have magnified your loving kindness, which you have shown me by saving my life, but I cannot escape to the mountains lest the disaster overtakes 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? And he said to him, behold, I grant you this request also not to overthrow the town which you have spoken. Hurry escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrived there. Therefore, the name of the town was called Zoar."

Lot just continues to amaze me. The angels literally grab he and his family by the hands and they drag them out of this city that's going to be destroyed, and then the angel says, flee to the mountains because God's going to destroy the valley and Lot is still so bent on doing his own thing, having his own way and really absolutely no faith and trust that God would take care of him. That he basically says, you know, I can't, please don't make me go into the mountains, if I go up there, I'll die. There's a little city over there, and what's implied in this by the angel is that that was a city that was going to be destroyed, but God spared it because of Lot, clearly that was a place of great wickedness. Lot's argument is they may be wicked, but they're small. It's just a little city. Let me go there and live and you're thinking, you know, he just doesn't get it. He just doesn't get it. He's just going right back to the same environment he left in Sodom. But sometimes God lets us have our way. It's one of the ways God disciplines us. It's one of the ways He judges us. Okay, we're going find out in the middle, that wasn't a very good choice, but He let him go and he went to Zoar and God spared that city.

Verse 23, "The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar. Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and he overthrew those cities and all the valley and all the inhabitants of the cities and what grew on the ground. But his wife from behind him looked back and she became a pillar of salt."

There are a number of things very interesting in this part of the story. If we were to look in second Peter chapter two, Peter clearly tells us that the reason God rained fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah was a warning for the ungodly to follow. You know, people read that, and people get really offended by that, but the reality is it's a picture of what every person will experience in judgment apart from the salvation that God has offered. The only difference is in Sodom and Gomorrah we're able to physically see it, but in the end it's still the same.

We mentioned before trying to figure out what was in Lot's heart that he hesitated to leave because we know for a fact that he was absolutely miserable in Sodom. You say, how do you know that? Because Peter tells us in second Peter chapter two. He tells us a number of very interesting things. Number one, he tells us that Lot was a righteous man. That alone kind of strikes us. But remember, righteousness is not based on our performance. It's based on a faith covenant relationship with God. Somewhere along the way, Lot had believed by faith and had been reckoned as righteous because that's how he's seen in the New Testament. But he basically chooses from there to go the way of the world. The carnal Christian is what Paul would call him. But that passage in second Peter two goes on to say that because he was righteous and he lived in this cesspool of sin, that every day his soul was tormented day by day by day. It's very graphic language, but it basically means he lived in absolute agony and torment every day that he lived in Sodom.

So again, the question, why didn't he leave? Well, you see the same thing now with Lot's wife. Oftentimes we have this image that Lot's wife just kind of glanced back and she turned into a pillar of salt. That's not the case at all. As a matter of fact, if you look closely at the text, she was lingering behind. It's a way of saying she didn't want to leave. She wasn't happy with this at all, and so she was lingering behind, but then she turned around, in the Hebrew, really means she looked longingly for the

city as a way of saying that's really where her heart was still at. That's really what she's still wanted, and so God judged her.

One of the most important principles in this whole story is seen in that experience with Lot's wife. It's very important to understand that worldliness is not a matter of location. It's a matter of heart. It was true that the angels could drag Lot's wife out of Sodom, but they could not get Sodom out of her heart.

There are a lot of Christians who are trying to manage their sin. They're trying to manage their sin and I have to tell you, that will not work. We can't control what we watch on television, so we get rid of the television. We can't control what we look at on the Internet, so we get rid of the computer. We can't control certain behaviors, so we don't go certain places. That's sin management and if you think that is going to solve the problem, you are sadly mistaken. Because if Sodom still lives here, in your heart, you will find a way to get back to Sodom.

Now, I understand there are times in crisis management when your life is so out of control, you have to take those kinds of steps. There are times when that is wise, but that is really just sin management. What has to change is in here. You have to believe with all of your heart that God tells the truth and that His way is the way of fulfillment and meaning and purpose in life and believe that the way of the world is the way of destruction and misery. And if you do not believe that with all your heart, you will eventually end up back in Sodom. That's critical to understand in this story.

Verse 27, "Now, Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the Lord and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley. And he saw and behold the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace. And it came about when God destroyed the cities of the valley that God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out in the midst of the overthrow. And he overthrew the cities in which Lot lived. And Lot, went up from Zoar and stayed in the mountains with his two daughters with him, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. And he stayed in a cave. He and his two daughters."

We get this glimpse of Abraham in the midst of all of this darkness. It's kind of a glimmer of light that takes us back to chapter 18 and reminds us when God was intimate with Abraham and what he experienced and how beautiful all of that was. And you have both literally and metaphorically Abraham standing up above the judgment of God and looking down and it provides the contrast of the two paths. There is the experience of Abraham and there is the judgment of the way of the wicked. And those are the two paths laid out in these two chapters.

You remember Lot went to Zoar because he was afraid to live in the mountains, but when he got to Zoar for whatever reason, he became fearful and he ends up in a cave with his two daughters. I mean, again, it wasn't a good choice.

Verse 31, "Then the first-born said to the younger, our father is old and there is not a man on earth to come into us after the manner of earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine and let us lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father. So, they made their father drink wine that night, and the first-born went in and lay with her father and he did not know when she laid down or when she arose. And it came about on the morrow, that 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 our family through our father. 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. Thus, both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. And the first-born bore a son, and called his name

Moab, he is the father of the Moabites to this day. And as for the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-ammi, he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day."

Lot had disciplined his daughters. He disciplined them in that environment of Sodom by his own lack of faith, by his own ethics and morals, by what he was willing to do with them, and they had learned it very well. And so, they got their father drunk. They had relations with him, and they would have his child.

It's interesting. That's the last glimpse of Lot in the Bible. What a pathetic ending to this story. Those two daughters would have Moab and Ammon who would become two of the great enemies of Israel, the Moabites and the Ammonites.

When we started this story, I asked you to think about a question. What was Lot looking for when he headed for Sodom? Let me ask you a question, what did he find there? The reality is that is a path of destruction. It's a path of heartache and misery.

Some of you you're looking at Sodom. You're standing on the hill and you're looking and you're thinking, maybe, maybe that's where it's at. Maybe that's what's going to make me happy. Some of you have already started your journey. You've pitched your tent outside of Sodom, and you're, you're pretty determined that's where you're going. And some of you have moved in, you've set up camp. But if you were to be honest, in your heart of hearts, you are miserable. It's not what you thought it would be. You're not happy, you're not fulfilled. But that's the great thing about God, is God offers forgiveness for the asking. To repent, to change your mind and to believe that God tells the truth, and by faith to believe that it is God's way that leads to fulfillment and meaning and purpose in everything you're looking for in life. And that it cannot, it just absolutely cannot be found down this road to Sodom.

But I want to tell you something, if you are absolutely determined to take the road to Sodom, I want you to understand, you have just read your biography and you need to ask yourself, is that really what I want in life?

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Arnie: So, Bryan, this has been a very sobering message for anyone listening who may find themselves on that road to Sodom. What do they need to consider and how do they change direction?

Bryan: Well, again, if we think back to James, so there's a progression to this. So, it's conceived, gives birth to the action, and then there's the pain of the action. So, the sooner it's dealt with, the better. So, I would say for any of our listeners, if you know this about yourself, if you understand this is where you're headed, that's good news. There's still plenty of hope, but you can't wait. You need to face it, you need to repent, you need to deal with that because the New Testament does say at some point your conscience becomes seared, cauterized and you don't feel it anymore. And that's when it's really frightening.

Cara: So, this a scheme that Lot's daughters come up with, it's just unthinkable.

Arnie: It's bizarre.

Cara: But then he treated them earlier really horribly. And so, it's just so sad.

Bryan: Yeah, it's terrible. It's just terrible. It's a difficult story to read. Different culture, different times, different values and all of that, but just the fact that they got him drunk in order to do this, tells you they knew this was immoral, so they needed to get him drunk to do it. And it's just a reminder that this was all messed up.

You know, you think of the danger of comparing your behavior to somebody else's behavior. So, you hear this with teenagers all the time. Well I'm not as bad as them. [right] So they're just comparing to the other kids and I'm not that bad. So, what did these girls see in Sodom on a daily basis, which convinced them that this was really not that bad in comparison to probably what they saw almost every day? And that's the danger of the standard being comparison instead of the standard being God.

Cara: Yeah. One of the outcomes of Lot's life is that he produced two of the worst enemy nations of God's people. What does that say about the result then of our poor choices?

Bryan: Well, I think the consequences are real and they can linger for years. You can't go back and change that, but there is a reality that even over generations some of our choices can be felt. And that's the case in Abraham and Lot's story.

Cara: It's not God punishing us though. It's just the consequences.

Bryan: Right. It's just the natural consequences and they often will go for years and even into the next generation.

Arnie: You mentioned that worldliness is not a matter of location, instead it's a matter of heart. But location does affect us, doesn't it?

Bryan: Well it does. I mean Paul says bad company corrupts good morals, so I think we need to be wise about that. But I would also say that environment doesn't have to affect us. We don't want to use that as an excuse. There's lots of righteous people that live in very difficult circumstances and they live in obedience to God. You know, Jesus would be the prime example. Perfect in every way, lived in a very sinful environment in terms of coming to this earth. So, I think we need to be wise, but also not use that as an excuse. I can choose to walk in obedience and that still has got to be a choice I make.

Cara: So, the desire to walk with God has to come from the heart. How does that differ then from the external pressure of legalism?

Bryan: Yeah, so it differs almost in every way. You know legalism is the big monster of the New Testament. So, Paul would say one is of the spirit and the other is of the flesh. And that's where the real tension is. He would also say one works and one doesn't. Legalism isn't a little off. It's way off and it caters to the flesh. The flesh likes legalism. So, Paul says the law condemns; it throws us in jail, but it's the spirit that sets us free. So, if you think about Romans 7 and Paul talking about things I want to do, I don't do, and I do the things I don't want to do. A lot of Christians read that and think, well that's my life. But they miss at the end of that, Paul says, wretched man that I am who will set me free? Chapter 8, the spirit of Jesus that dwells within us sets us free. No Christian has to live that way, but the law, legalism will never get us out of jail. It has to be the spirit of Jesus

Cara: Like that.