

Righteous Lot?

Grace Fellowship | Cory Hughes | Genesis 19

"Please open your Bibles this morning to Genesis chapter 19. If you remember last week, Corey preached from Genesis chapter 18, where three men came to visit Abraham. Two were angels and one was Yahweh Himself. And after they had visited with Abraham and Sarah, and shared with them again that they were going to have a son, and after they had shared with Abraham that He was going to destroy the city of Sodom, the two angels go down to Sodom.

And now we pick up the story in chapter 19, beginning in verse 1: 'The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, 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 and said, "My lords, please turn aside 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 town square." 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.'

We want to talk this morning about righteous Lot. 'Righteous Lot,' you might say? After we hear the rest of the story in Genesis chapter 19, many people have doubted if Lot was truly a righteous man. But let's look at the second epistle of Peter, chapter 2, beginning in verse 6: 'If by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes He condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if He rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.'

So Peter, by the Holy Spirit, tells us clearly that Lot was a righteous man. And as we walk through this text, we're going to see how Peter arrived at that conclusion through the word of God.

The first thing I want us to see is that righteous Lot was a man of hospitality. Lot was sitting in the gate. The gate of the ancient city was the place where business was conducted. It was the place where the elders sat and where they made decisions for the city. It was a place of high standing in the community. And Lot was sitting there. And he sees these two men coming, most likely from the north, and he immediately rises and bows before them. Not a worshipful bow, but a bow of respect.

He recognizes that these men are foreigners. He doesn't know them. But he understands the necessity of hospitality. He says, 'Turn aside to your servant's house.' He urges them

strongly. Why? Because Lot knows the culture of Sodom. Lot knows that if they spend the night in the town square, they will not be safe. They will be under attack. And so, in his righteousness, he wants to protect these strangers. He brings them into his house. He makes a feast for them. He bakes unleavened bread. He shows them the kind of hospitality that he had seen in his uncle Abraham's life.

Secondly, righteous Lot was a man under attack. Verse 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. And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them."'

This culture was so wicked that they wanted to sexually abuse these two strangers. Peter says that Lot was 'greatly distressed' by their conduct. He was 'tormenting his soul' day after day. Lot lived in a culture that was diametrically opposed to everything that he believed in. And yet he lived there. Why? Well, we know that when Abraham and Lot separated, Lot chose the valley of the Jordan because it was well-watered. It looked like the garden of the Lord. It looked like the land of Egypt. He made a choice based on his eyes, not on his faith. And he ended up living in the midst of wickedness.

Thirdly, righteous Lot was a man of failed compromise. Lot goes out to the men at the entrance. He shuts the door after him. He says, 'I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any 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.'

We look at that and we say, 'How could he?' How could he offer his daughters to these wicked men? It's a moment of desperate compromise. He's trying to fulfill his duty of hospitality, but he's doing it by sacrificing his own family. It is a failed compromise. The men of the city reject his offer. They say, 'Stand back! This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.' They pressed hard against him and came near to break down the door.

Fourthly, righteous Lot was a man of providential rescue. The two men—the angels—reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house and shut the door. And they struck with blindness the men who were at the entrance of the house, both small and great, so that they wore themselves out groping for the door.

Lot couldn't save himself. Lot couldn't save his daughters. He was at the end of his rope. But the Lord intervened. God sent His angels to rescue him. The angels tell him, 'Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. For we are about to destroy this place.' Lot goes out to his sons-in-law who were to marry his daughters and says, 'Up! Get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city.' But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting. They didn't believe him.

Lot had lived among them for so long, and had compromised in such ways, that they no longer took his word seriously.

Fifthly, righteous Lot was a man of lingering faith. As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, 'Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.' But he lingered. Even with the warning, even with the presence of the angels, Lot hesitated. He didn't want to leave. He had built a life there. He had property there. He had standing there. And 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 out and set him outside the city. God literally had to drag him out of the judgment. Lot's righteousness was not based on his perfect obedience, but on God's mercy.

Sixthly, righteous Lot was a man of incomplete obedience. Once they were outside, the angels said, 'Escape for your life! Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away.' And Lot said to them, 'Oh, no, my lords. Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life. But I cannot escape to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I die. Behold, this 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!'

Even in the rescue, Lot is negotiating. He doesn't want to go to the hills where God told him to go. He wants to go to another city. He wants to stay in the valley. And the angel says to him, 'Behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. Escape there quickly, for I can do nothing till you arrive there.' The city was called Zoar.

Seventhly, righteous Lot was a man who suffered the consequences of his choices. The sun had risen when Lot entered Zoar. Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven. He overthrew those cities and all the valley and all the inhabitants and what grew on the ground. But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. She looked back because her heart was still in Sodom. She loved the world more than she loved God. And she suffered the judgment.

Lot ends up in a cave in the hills, the very place he was afraid to go. He's lost everything. He's lost his home, his standing, his wealth, and his wife. He's left with only his two daughters. And the story ends with a dark episode of further compromise and sin.

So why does Peter call him 'righteous Lot'? Because Lot's righteousness was a gifted righteousness. It wasn't because he was a perfect man. It wasn't because he made all the right choices. It was because he had put his faith in the God of Abraham. And God, in His mercy, counted him as righteous.

This story is a warning to us all. We can be righteous and yet live in such a way that our lives are ineffective and filled with compromise. We can be so entangled with the world that God has to drag us out of the judgment.

But it's also a story of great hope. Because if God could save righteous Lot, He can save you and me. Our righteousness is not our own. It is the righteousness of Christ Jesus, given to us by grace through faith.

Let's pray. *Father, we thank Thee for Thy word. We thank Thee for the story of Lot, as difficult and dark as it is. We thank Thee for the reminder that Thy mercy is greater than our sin. We pray that Thou wouldst grant us the grace to live as righteous people, not entangled with the world, but set apart for Thy glory. In Jesus' name, Amen."*