



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 19: 1-38

“The Harvest Of Sowing To The Flesh”

TRANSCRIPT

Returning to Genesis chapter 19 for our scripture reading this morning, you will remember that in chapter 18, God appeared to Abraham, spoke again concerning the promises that had been made to him, gave specific word concerning the fact that Sarah would be mother of the promised seed and then the chapter concluded with the intercession of Abraham for the wicked city of Sodom and Gomorrah. And now chapter 19 continues and you remember as you read chapter 18, that there were three men who came to visit Abraham, one of whom turns out to be the Lord Himself, a theophany, an appearance of the Lord Jesus before the incarnation, and then the other two, it now becomes plain were angelic beings. For we read in Chapter 19, verse 1,

"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 himself 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.' (That incidentally was the custom in those days, if you visited a city, to spend the night out in the open ordinarily.) '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. Before they lay down the men of the city, the men of Sodom surrounded the house, both young and

old, all the people from every quarter. (Well, you notice both young and old.) And they called to Lot and said to him, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them.’ (This is sexual relations. So these are homosexual relations.) 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 man. Please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like. Only do nothing to these men, inasmuch 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 is 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, (that is, the angelic men) 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.

“Then the men said to Lot, ‘Whom else have you here? A son-in-law and your sons and your daughters, and 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 you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy the city.’ But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting. 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. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his daughters for the compassion of the Lord was upon him and they brought him out and put him outside the city.’ (That clause translated in the New American Standard Bible “for the compassion of the Lord was upon him” is literally “and the mercy or forbearance of the Lord upon him. And that word translated compassion as the word that is translated "pity" in the Authorized Version in one of the

Messianic sections of chapter 63 of the Book of Isaiah. It means pity or mercy, "in the compassion or pity of the Lord upon him."

“And it came about when they had brought them outside that one said, ‘Escape for your life. Do not look behind you and 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 and you have magnified your lovingkindness which you have shown me by saving my life, but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest the disaster overtake and I die. (So he pleads that it would be of too much physical exertion for him to go to the mountains.) 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 spared.’ (In other words, he says this is such a small place it wouldn’t be a great demand on the mercy of God to spare this little place.)

“And he said to them, ‘Behold I grant you this request also, not to overthrow the town of which you have spoken. Hurry, escape there for I cannot do anything until you arrive there.’” Therefore, the name of the town was called Zoar, (small). 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. (Incidentally, in this 24th verse you will notice it says, the Lord rained brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven and so the ancient interpreters have thought that that was another place in the Old Testament that taught plurality in the Godhead.) "The Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven," (So it would be the Lord out of heaven, the Father, raining down fire and brimstone at the direction of the Lord, the Son, who has made this theophany or appearance here upon the earth.) “And he overthrew those cities and all of 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.

“Now Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the Lord and he looked down towards Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley and saw and behold, the smoke of the land descended like the smoke of a furnace. Thus it came

about when God destroyed the cities of the valley that God remembered Abraham. (You can see from this that it is the Abrahamic covenant that governs this mercy that is shown to Lot.) God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot lived. And Lot went up from Zoar and stayed in the mountains and his two daughters with him for he was afraid to stay in Zoar and he stayed in a cave, he and his two daughters.

“Then the firstborn 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 the 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 firstborn went in and lay with her father and he did not know where she lay or when she arose. And it came about on the morrow that the firstborn 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 laid down or when she arose. Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. And the firstborn 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-Ami. He is the father of the sons of Amon to this day.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

Paul’s letter to the Galatians reads this way: "For the one who sows to his own flesh, shall from the flesh reap corruption. But the one who sows to the Spirit, shall from the Spirit reap eternal life." That text finds illustration in the experience of Lot, the nephew of Abraham.

Our subject for this morning is “Sodom, Lot and the harvest of sowing to the flesh.” Lot’s story portrays the tragedy of carnality, a believer who wishes to have the best of both worlds. He wants to have the best of the eternal benefits of the forgiveness of sins, of justification, of the relationship of sonship to God and of all of other spiritual blessings that belong to those who have believed to the Lord Jesus Christ. But at the same time, Lot desired all of the temporal possessions

of this life, the earthly possessions, which are so meaningful to so many of us. Position, influence, money, and the things that men seek so avidly after. And Lot learned, of course to his own sadness ultimately and to the grief of all who knew him, that one cannot accomplish this impossible task. It is impossible to have the best of both worlds. And even though Lot was a believer, he nevertheless learned that sad lesson in the experience of his family.

Now there is no question, I think, that Lot was a believer. One might think with a history of such as we find here, that Lot is an illustration of a man who did not persevere in the faith, because, did he not have an ignominious end? But nevertheless, the Bible seems to be fairly plain that he was a believer, but a believer who did seek to have the best of both worlds and thus lost almost everything. Lot had the greatest of hospitality. That is one of the graces that should characterize a believer. He had the experience of entertaining angels unawares and also the experience of being used as an illustration in the New Testament of hospitality. He made a courageous defense of his guests, went out in the midst of that wicked crowd and gained their anger and nevertheless, defended them.

In addition, in a wicked city that it appears that everyone was infected with the sin of the city, he had two daughters who were virgin daughters. That must have been very rare in the city of Sodom. And while in a moment, he will attempt to turn them over to the wicked men of the city because of the high regard that the ancients had for hospitality, nevertheless, it is true that they were virgin daughters.

And finally, he is the object of a very gracious deliverance on the part of God, who sought him out with angels in order to deliver him from the destruction of that city. It is the New Testament, however, which lets us know, finally and definitely, that Lot was a believer. He is called three times a righteous man in the New Testament. Reference is made to his righteousness three times in 2 Peter, Chapter 2. He is called “Just Lot”, or “Righteous Lot.” It is said that he vexed himself by the conversations that took place in Sodom and the life of thje city. So he is an

illustration of a Christian believer who made a decision that was wrong and then had to suffer the consequences of it on down, even after his own earthly life.

This chapter is a rather superb study, incidentally of two aspects of judgment. We find cataclysmic judgement in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but we also find gradual judgement in the life of a man like Lot, for you can see that this decision that he made many years ago finally issues in the disintegration of this man, and he and his family break up even in the midst of the hands of those who were sent by God to rescue them from the destruction of the city.

So Lot is a sad story of a worldly Christian who knew something of one of the greatest movements of God in history. He was Abraham's nephew. He had been called out with Abram, followed Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, knew about Abram's election, knew about the promises that had been given to him, was a part of a company of people to whom God gave some of the greatest promises of the Bible. He had evidence in the life of Abraham of unusual working of the power of God. He was one who experienced the deliverance that Abraham won for them in the battle of chapter 14. So a man knew about divine things, had firsthand contact with the great example of faith, and yet in spite of that, his piety is one of a fast-fading variety.

He made that fateful decision to choose his place to dwell near Sodom in the midst of the fertile valley of the plain. Then the text of Scripture said that he pitched his tent towards Sodom. The next chapter says that he was living in Sodom, and now in chapter 19 he is sitting in the gate of Sodom. Evidently or perhaps an influential man possibly, even one of the eldest of the city, and we see that he is now in the state that he offers his daughters to two ungodly men to marry for they were evidently ungodly men. The Bible says that we are to separate ourselves from unbelievers.

Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers and the greatest of yokes is the yoke of marriage. We laugh about the yoke of marriage but the yoke of marriage is a yoke. Now of course it is a great yoke for those who love one another, but the Scriptures are very clear, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" and a believer who marries an unbeliever shall suffer. And here is Lot giving his two daughters away. If they were believers, at least they were part of the deliverance

here to wicked and ungodly men. How important are the simple decisions of life and some of those decisions about which we thought very little are decisions that ultimately will affect not only our lives, but the lives of those who come after us. As we shall see Lot's disintegration affects not only him, but it affects his children as well and the chapter ends on that sordid note of incest, Lot being a drunken partner in it.

There are other important lessons in this particular chapter. There is the danger of looking back. One wonders in the case of Lot's wife whether she was a believer or a not. In the morning service I said, as I was just passing, she was a believer, and I am not sure that she really was, so I want to correct that. It may well have been that she was not a believer. But the danger of looking back pertains to those who have had an opportunity to hear the gospel but who turned away from it in apostasy just as it pertains to those who have truly responded to the gospel but turn away from following after the Lord more completely. So, the danger of looking back. It reminds us of Demas who left the apostle Paul and went back to Thessalonica having loved this present age, Paul says. The danger of looking back.

There was a Sunday school teacher once who was describing how Lot's wife looked back and suddenly turned into a pillar of salt, and as little children do in the Sunday school, they frequently want to illustrate things and interrupt the teacher and so Johnny interrupted the teacher at this point—and incidentally it is very interesting to teach children because they usually give interesting family illustrations that the family has no idea are really being told broadly -- so this little boy said, "My mother looked back once while she was driving and turned into a telephone pole." [Laughter]

This chapter also illustrates I think the difficulty of delivering good men from the perils of sin for it is clear that the angels, speaking from the human standpoint, had great difficulty in delivering Lot who wanted to linger from the destruction that they had announced over the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Probably the greatest lesson that the New Testament gives other than the lesson our Lord gives in his famous three words "Remember Lot's wife," is the lesson of the divine ability and necessity of executing judgment.

In 2 Peter Chapter 2 and Jude verse 7, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is set forth as an example of the suffering of eternal fire. In fact, where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are today is not definitely known. Many have thought that in the southern part of the Dead Sea, where the waters are shallow, it is under there that the city of Sodom and Gomorrah are to be found. But at any rate, the waters of that Dead Sea, if that be true, ripple over a part of the site where once stood the cities of the plain with all of the busy stir of life that was there, all of the sounds of human joy, of human sorrow, of traffic, of the call of the herdsmen, the murmur of the market, the voices of the little children playing in the open spaces, but today it's all solid. An illustration of the judgment of God, and if you should ever stand by the side of the Dead Sea, at that point, that is one of the things that perhaps would be brought to your attention.

Luther confessed that he could not read this chapter without a feeling of deep revulsion. He used to say, “*Es gehet mir durch, es ganzes mir Herz* -- It goes straight through for myself, straight through my heart.” Now he was speaking of course of the evil that is reflected here in this 19th chapter of homosexuality, but when one thinks about the wickedness of the city and the judgment that it suggests that should bring revulsion to the spirits of men who are in harmony with the thoughts of God as well.

But let us turn now to chapter 19 of the Book of Genesis and we look first at the first eleven verses. This is a lengthy chapter; we cannot deal with every verse. I want to deal for a few moments with the depravity of Sodom as it is expressed here in these opening sections. It is angelic work according to this chapter to quicken the lingering. The angels were sent in order to deliver Lot and his family from the judgment that is to come. It is a great mercy, incidentally, to be sought by the mercy of God.

And Lot was the object of the mercy of God. He did not appreciate it and it is obvious. He wanted to stay, he wanted to linger, and even hesitated after the judgment is announced. He sought to wheedle some additional concessions from the angels. There are people who at times react negatively to those who seek to bring them out of their sin to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus

Christ, but let me assure you, my dear friends, that it's a great mercy of God for you to be sought by earnest Christian friends for the Kingdom of God. If you should happen to have some Christian friends who are so concerned about your soul that they speak to you and rebuke you concerning your sin, and rebuke you concerning your need of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is one of the greatest mercies that God could ever show you. I am so thankful that I had individuals at a point in my life who rebuked me and sought to bring me to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It used to irritate me. I used to get in arguments, which I usually won. But it was one of the greatest mercies of God that He kept continually after me until finally, through my own mother-in-law I came to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior.

Lot had angels seeking to bring him out of that place and while he did not like the work of the angels, it was the mercy of God. Listen to Scripture. "He hesitated, so the men seized his hand, and the hand of his wife, and the hands of his daughters for the compassion of the Lord was upon him." "In the pity, in the mercy of the Lord upon him," the Hebrew text reads, so he was the object of divine blessing even though he did not particularly enjoy it.

Well, the two men, who are angels who had been with Abraham and the Lord near the Oaks of Mamre have now reached the city of Sodom and as they come through the gate, they engage in the ministry, which is ultimately to carry out the Abrahamic mercy promised in the promises given as far back as Genesis, Chapter 12. It is an illustration incidentally too of God's interest in the individual, because God was interested in Lot. One of the commentators has said, "Special value attaches to handpicked fruit." And this is a case of handpicked fruit, for Lot is by himself, taken out of that city by the working of the Lord.

When the men come, they were thought to be men, they were really angels, when they came to the city of Sodom, Lot was there sitting in the gate and when he saw them, moved with the desire to show them compassion, he bowed down before him in a worshipful position and said, "Behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house and spend the night."

Incidentally, nothing is said about his wife. What are we to think about her? What was she doing now, home cooking? Someone has said home cooking. That is where a husband thinks his wife is. But it is Lot who turns out to be the cook in this instance for he finally urges the two men and evidently, they are not so anxious to go home with Lot. They were anxious to sit down and be fed by Abraham in the 18th Chapter, but here with Lot, it's a little different, and it may just be a reflection of the difference in the spiritual condition of Abraham and Lot. But they yield and they come to Lot's home and Lot prepared a feast for them and baked unleavened bread and they ate. And before they were to lie down to sleep, the men of the city having seen the two men who must have been rather good-looking men, angelic beings, suddenly the whole city, and notice not only the men of the city but the men young and old, even the children, the male children evidently gather around the house and the request comes to Lot, "Bring out the two men that have come to you tonight, that we may have relationships with them, that we may know them", the Hebrew text says.

D. Sherwin Bailey has written a rather interesting book in one way. It's is called *Homosexuality in the Western Christian Tradition*. And in that book, he sought to show that the verb, "know" here and also in Judges 19:22 does not have a sexual connotation. Now, he bases his denial on some arguments that we do not have time to talk about this morning, but it is an indication of the fact the even today there are serious attempts made by individuals sympathetic with homosexual movements to avoid the plain and obvious, I think, teaching of the Old Testament is that homosexuality is an abomination before the Lord.

The word “know” here in the light of the context and also in that Judges 19 passage, is a word that refers to sexual relations with those of the same sex. And so what we have here is an attempt at homosexual rape on the part of the men of the city. And it is set forth here in Sodom as the reason for the outcry that had reached the heart of the Lord and had caused him to say that the sin of that city was exceedingly grave. When we think about sodomy, we think about the city of Sodom. Sodomy, unnatural sexual relationships, particularly sexual relationships with individuals of

the same sex, and that name derived from Sodom. Sodomy, you read it in your newspapers everyday for our society is filled with sodomy and lesbianism.

Now, what happened was, as we have just read in the Scripture reading, the men of the city sought to have the men come out to them that they may enter into these relationships with them, but Lot, because of the high value placed upon hospitality evidently, went out and announced to them that he had two daughters who are virgin daughters and he offered this to the men in order that they may have relationships with them, but he asked them not to do anything to the men, inasmuch as they had come under the shelter of his roof.

They said, "Stand aside; you are acting like a judge in our midst." It is obvious that while he been there and evidently he had a place and position, deep down within they did not really like Lot. There was something about Lot that made him different, and even in his worldliness, there was that basic commitment to the promises given to Abraham and they figured that out.

That is why, incidentally, a worldly believer never is able to accomplish what he thinks he will accomplish. He thinks that by mingling with the world, he will be an influence upon them. But he is not an influence upon them and the one who is hurt is he himself. And so Lot now is the object of anger and rage of the crowd. So, he has succeeded in his attempt to bring order into the situation and jeopardizing the lives of his daughters, of enraging his friends and requiring rescue by the ones that he was seeking to protect, the angels themselves. So, in the midst of the kind of small riot that took place, the angels reach their hands out the door outside the door, take Lot, bring him within the room and then as a result of that a supernatural blindness is given to men.

That blindness, incidentally is a work that is found in only one other place in the Old Testament in 2 Kings, chapter 6, verse 18 and it refers to the confusion of the brain by means of confusion of the eye so that they were struck with a form of blindness that dazed them, but nevertheless as a result of the blindness of their eye, their minds became confused and so they thought they were seeing, but they were seeing wrongly and in seeking to find the door, they finally

could not find it and then just gave up. It was the judgment of God upon them, mental confusion from distorted vision.

And there is something about this that interests me because we are living in a society that is a society that is filled with increasing emphasis upon homosexual life. In a cover story in *Time* magazine, an article entitled 'How Gay Is Gay', not written by any Christian believer, of course, in this article, it is estimated that 10 percent of the population of the United States of America are afflicted with homosexuality in some form or another. Some of our leading citizens are publicly known to be and announce the fact that they are; Truman Capote, Tennessee Williams, and others of similar influence who are not ashamed to admit that they are homosexuals.

Did you know, according to this article, that the styles that we think are straight styles are styles that come straight from homosexuals? This startled me. I did not know this. I don't frequent too many discos, [laughter] but according to this article the disco lights, the disco dancing and the disco music first took place in the homosexual clubs and was taken over by the straight clubs. Did you know that the music that we sing is music that is quite largely brought to us by homosexuals? Did you know with reference to style, for example, that the first men who wore Adidas running shoes as part of casual wear were homosexuals in the homosexual community? You should go home and throw yours in the garbage can, I guess, if you want to. [Laughter]

That the first to wear baggy white painter's pants, which became quite popular, were homosexuals. The first to wear scarves around their necks with sport coats, rather fashionable attire, were the homosexuals. Furthermore, this may surprise you, but the first to wear long hair among men were the homosexuals, and also the first to move from long hair styling back to shorter hair styling were the homosexuals. In other words, the society and the style by which most of us live, a large part of it is traceable, according to this article, loads of it is traceable to the homosexual community. And, of course, we know from the influence of the arts and music and others, society in which homosexuality is very prominent, and that probably is to be expected. Our society is a society that is filled today with homosexual influence.

The interesting thing about it to me is that the Apostle Paul in one of the fieriest sections in his writings in Romans, chapter 1 speaks very strongly with regard to a point that I would like to offer to you just as an opinion or as a judgment and let you make up your own mind. You know in the latter part of Romans chapter 1, the Apostle, speaking about the fact that the human race has fallen into sin, turned away from the revelation that was given in the Old Testament, made it necessary, their turning away, made it necessary for God to give them over to all kinds of judgment, but the judgment to which God gave them over was more sin, and it is specifically stated in Romans chapter 1, verses 26 and 27 that as a result of the apostasy of the race, God has given them over to homosexual practices.

We read, let me just read those verses, Romans 1, verses 26 and 27, as soon as I find the Epistle to the Romans, that is the New Testament, isn't it? Verse 26, "For this reason, God gave them over to degrading passions, for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural – lesbianism – and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire towards one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error."

Now the interesting thing about this and I just throw this out as a suggestion to you is that the apostle regards this as a judgment upon men. It is not something he is going to do; it is something that God has done. So when we look at increasing homosexuality in our society, we do not say, "Well if this continues, we are liable to experience the judgment of God." According to Paul, the increase in homosexual practices is the judgment of God. It is upon us because of our apostasy from divine truth and so when we see this pervading our society, we are not a society that is moving toward judgment, but we are society that is already under judgment and moving toward the final cataclysmic destruction of the society as we know it when the Lord Jesus Christ comes at his second advent to the earth. If the apostle were here, he would give us those same strong words concerning homosexuality. I'd love to have heard an exposition of the 19th chapter from the

Apostle Paul, as a matter of fact, of any chapter from the Apostle Paul would be all right as far as I'm concerned.

The next section in verses 12 through 22 is the account of the deliverance of Lot, and I love the way the angels speak to Lot because angels and apostles speak a little bit differently from men down here upon the earth. You will notice that there is no squeamishness at all in the announcement of coming judgment. Their lips are not lined with velvet such as our modern preachers lips are lined with velvet. They are not afraid to speak of hellfire, and damnation and I cannot help but feel that there is so much more than sentimentality in our United States of America. The result is that men stand in the pulpit, men who even acknowledge that they believe the Bible, but when they talk about judgment, you really hardly ever hear these notes that the apostles and our Lord Jesus gave out.

Our modern feeling that we should not offend men by speaking of hellfire and damnation is not of the Lord. Are we to be more gentle than the apostles? Are we to be more true to the divine revelation than our Lord Jesus Christ who is the one who speaks more of hellfire and damnation than anyone else in Scripture? How is it going to be when we get to heaven and the subject of this comes up and we have spent our time trying to be wiser than the word of God, trying to introduce judgment as a nice semi-palatable kind of thing in the midst of the exposition of the love of God?

My dear friends, sitting in the audience, if you are not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are heading for the Gehenna of fire. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who speaks of the undying One and it is He who speaks of unquenchable fire and that is your destiny if you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh my friend, turn from your sin. Turn from the wickedness which you have inherited from Adam and which you practice, to the wonderful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who, through the blood of the cross, offers a way of escape. Your destiny is the destiny of those that are perishing. Flee to the city of refuge, our Lord Jesus Christ. I wish it were possible for me to warn you in proper accents of the judgment of God. Baxter used to say that when you spoke of the judgment of God, you ought to speak of it with tears in your voice.

Now the angels, when they speak to Lot, they do not trim their sails at all; they do not cut corners. They say to Lot, "Whom else do you have here? Do you have a son-in-law, sons and daughters, whomever you have in the city, bring them out of this place because we are about to destroy it."

Now Lot was so under the influence of the angels at this point that he went to his sons-in-law and sought to persuade them to leave the city, but in a very classic text in verse 14, it says, "But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting." That is the way people respond to those whose profession is of a certain style but whose actual life is something entirely different. While they said, when Lot told them about judgment to come, he is just giving us a big laugh. They took it as if it were one huge joke, that there was judgment coming to the city of Sodom.

You see, the Christian man because of his worldliness has lost his testimony in the midst of the unsaved. It's always that way. It's always that way. If you want to reach the lost, you have to be different, not the same, different. It is Abraham who is able to reach those who are outside of Christ. Not Lot, not the men who went down and was the lovely citizen in the community, gained influence and position as if that were a testimony to the grace of God; it was just the opposite. It was Abraham who was the man of God and was able to exhort the vile sinners.

Now, you know, of course, in Believers Chapel that we have preached very strongly the doctrines of sovereign grace. Most of us, I think, feel very, very strongly in the doctrine of sovereign grace. Some of our enemies think that if you believe in the sovereign grace of God, you cannot exhort sinners. How foolish! How foolish! The Bible sets forth exhortation as the means by which God wins his elect, and so we do exhort sinners. If it's vile for a man who believes in the sovereign grace of God to exhort sinners, seek to persuade them to come to Christ, then we will continue to be vile. And by the grace of God, we will be vile still because we want sinners to come to Christ. We want you to come if you are outside of Christ to believe in him. Exhortation is for the elect of God, so we exhort you, come to Christ, believe in him. Through him alone, there is salvation.

Now, Lot hesitated. Isn't that interesting? How insane Lot's lingering must have seemed to the angels. Here they have announced the judgment to come as coming from God and Lot is seeking to wheedle one last concession of them. Do not make me to go to the mountains. That's too much trouble and I may get lost in the judgment that is to come. Let me go over in this little city over here. It's just a little place and surely to save Zoar, that would not be a great call upon the mercy of God, would it? A man, the subject of the grace and mercy of God, seeking to make one last concession out of God. Not even brimstone and fire can make a pilgrim out of Lot.

That is an important principle and the picture that you get of the angels is remarkable. Two angels, they are four hands, because they appeared as man. Four people are dragged out of the city, you can see the two angels; one with Lot in his hand on this side and Lot's wife's hand in his hand on this side and the other with the two daughters each in one hand, and the two of them dragging these four unwilling people out of the city of Sodom, which is soon to be destroyed, oh, for the grace of God, manifested to Lot.

Now, Lot is hastened by them. It is a bit of illustration incidentally, an illustration of the security of the believer because we read down here in verse 22 that the angel said, "Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there." In other words, the angel's hands were tied in destruction of the city until Lot is out of the city because God has determined that his elect soul shall be saved from this destruction. That illustrates, of course, the eternal security of the believer because our eternal security rests on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ and we cannot be lost. "I have given unto them eternal life and they shall never perish!" How wonderful it is to know that. Once having believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, I am secure forever and standing behind that promise is the power of God.

How Sodom is destroyed, the Bible does not say. Great discussion has taken place over this by the archeologists and Old Testament scholars. We know that the land above those cities was volcanic. It is possible that there did take place a volcano at the behest of God. It is possible that an earthquake took place. It is possible that the earthquake broke open the earth, the gases of the

chemicals that were there were released and explosion followed with the materials being shot up into the air, exceedingly high, mixed with the salt, the sulfur and the salt, characteristic of that part of the land, and the result then was the raining down from heaven of the materials as a result of the explosion. That has been suggested by some competent scholars. Still others have taken the ancient view that it was simply a supernatural raining down from the Lord in heaven of fire and brimstone.

At any rate, the cities were overthrown and, of course, the saddest story is the story of Lot's wife. Whether Lot's wife was a Christian or not, the Scriptures do not say, but she is an illustration of both a nonbeliever and a believer in turning back for both turn back. We read in verse 26, “But his wife from behind him looked back and she became a pillar of salt.” She was an example of a refusal to make a clean break, the kind of thing that I know is apropos for many of us here in this auditorium. And the fact that she turned back is something that betrayed the true home of her heart, and unfortunately, by turning back it left her unsheltered in the plain where the judgment was coming, and as the materials rained down from the sky evidently, they fell upon her and her body became encrusted with salt, and she became a kind of perpetual memorial of what it means to turn back because one loves the things of this world rather than the things of the Lord.

Abraham comes to look over the destruction because he sees it in the distance and so he came down and looked over it and saw the smoke that ascended from the destruction of the five cities of the plain, and the text of Scripture says, verse 29, “Thus it came about when God destroyed the cities of the valley that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of that city.” In other words, God remembered Lot for Abraham's sake. God remembered Lot for the sake of the promises. God did not save Lot for Lot's sake, but for the sake of the promises of mercy, which have been granted.

The last part of the chapter which I won't say much about is the disgrace of Lot. Schemes of unbelief by the two daughters. Incidentally, you will notice again this is, I think, the third time that we have seen this. Perhaps only the second, so far, but I may reference to some other incidents. This is at least the second time in which the drinking of excessive alcoholic beverages is linked with

sexual immorality, and we have it again here, excessive alcoholism with sexual immorality. The names of the two sons that were born, Moab means "from the father" and Amon means "son of my people" and both of them have within the names references to the sin of incest. "From the father and son of my people" represent the kind of sin that took place.

As you well know, it is Moab and Amon, the Moabites and the Amonites, who trouble Israel throughout the remainder of their Old Testament history. So the simple little things of life, the decision of Lot which Abraham offered him. "Take whatever you want." And he looked toward the cities of the well-watered plain and chose that place for his domicile. That simple decision which seems so in itself, so easy, so inconsequential is the thing that ultimately leads to the disintegration of this man and also not only of him and his immediate wife, but also of his children.

Let me tell you, my dear friends. The simple decisions of life that you make regarding the interests of the world in your life will have their definite effect not only in you but in your children, and in their children's children, and you are responsible for those children that God has given you to train them in the word of God and to urge them and exhort them to make decisions that the Lord Jesus Christ shall have as fullest way as possible in our lives.

May God help you who are adults in Believers Chapel to face up to the decisions of life. May God help you to bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and preserve them for Him and preserve them from the disintegration that inevitably follows even when believers decide for the world. The divine disapproval of Lot is seen in the fact that Lot lives an unrecorded life. We do not know anything about his death. He falls into an unknown grave. We do not know where he was buried. All the end of a foolish choice.

No joy in the halfway experiences of Christianity. The Lord Jesus says an interesting word about this event, "Remember Lot's wife." Those three words, "Remember Lot's wife", some would say refer to the shortest biography in the world in one sentence. "But his wife from behind him looked back and she became a pillar of salt." Those three words, "Remember Lot's wife," underline the danger of spiritual relapse because of failure to set our priorities right in our Christian life. It is

the Lord Jesus Who warns us. My dear friends in the audience, as an ambassador of him, "Remember Lot's wife." One last thing. It has been said incidentally that she stood a solid sentinel to sordid selfishness, beautiful statement.

There is one final thing that I want to mention. The sin of Sodom, of course, was awful. It was the sin of homosexuality, lesbianism, and all of the other forms of sordid sexual sin that go along with it. And we are inclined to think that that is the greatest kind of sin that a man could commit. But the Lord Jesus said it is not the greatest. As a matter of fact, he said that there were individuals that were going to suffer a great deal more than Sodom and Gomorrah because of much greater opportunities. He said, I am reading His words, "And whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words as you go out of that house or that city, shake off the dust off your feet." Individuals who refuse the message of the Apostles, "Truly I say to you, it would be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment then for that city."

In other words, the sin of Sodom was great but the sin of the rejection of Jesus Christ is far greater. And you are faced today with the necessity of deciding to receive Christ or to reject Christ. To reject Christ is to sin greater than the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. I call upon you and ask you, why do you linger? Why do you not come to the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you think it will affect your business, your family, your pleasures? Why do you linger?

Why is it necessary for me to exhort you to come to Christ and receive everlasting life? Why must I plead with you as an ambassador of Jesus Christ? Come to Him. Come now. He has offered the all-atoning sacrifice by which our sins may be forgiven. Come to Him. Receive it as a gift. You cannot earn it. You are lost and undone. No good works of yours are acceptable to God the Father. We are not saved by our good works for by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourself. It is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast. Come to Him. Turn aside from trust in anything in this life: your church, your good works, your family, your education, your culture, and come and receive as a penitent, the free gift of eternal life.