

**Genesis 19: 12-25; “The Lord being Merciful to Lot”, Sermon # 56 in
the series – “Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
October 7th, 2012, in the Morning Worship Service.**

The passage that is before us is given to us to show us the sinful weakness which even true believers can fall into if they do not make wise choices. I think that most of us understand that unbelievers are going to make wrong choices and suffer the consequences of those wrong choices. But we seldom stop to consider that the pull of the world can cause a true Christian to compromise in the way that Lot is pictured in this chapter. If we were not told that Lot was a righteous man in 2nd Peter 2: 8, we would be hard pressed to find enough evidence to establish the reality of his faith in the verses that we have just read.

It is indeed a very sad spectacle when a righteous man compromises with the world as a result of his own personal, sinful weakness. It is indeed a shame and a reproach. But let us not simply condemn him, but turn our gaze upon ourselves and seek to know where we might be failing in the same ways that Lot did. The Lord was merciful to Lot because he was a righteous man who was willing to learn the way of repentance, even though he had fallen so far.

We will see in our next sermon that the Lord will not continue to show mercy to Lot’s wife, because she did not want to learn the way of repentance from the Lord. She was shown mercy, but her heart was still in Sodom, and she turned back to look longingly at what she was leaving behind; a thing which the angel had expressly told her not to do, and so she lost her soul. You and I need to understand this morning that God will never let one of his own Elect people perish in their sins.

The real question is whether or not we are one of His people; whether we have saving faith in Jesus Christ. If we truly belong to Christ, we are willing to learn the lessons of repentance. We are willing to learn God’s good way which is better than all the world. This great salvation from all our sins is all based upon God’s mercy in Christ Jesus. It is bestowed on the same basis that God shows mercy to all His Elect. God’s keeping of His people, and His providential care over their lives, are actively there at work in their lives to see that they might learn the good and right way which is all based upon His mercy and grace in Christ.

So the question that we are going to ask this morning is, “How was the Lord merciful to righteous Lot, even when He knew that Lot had compromised with the world?” As you listen to this sermon, if you do not know Christ yet, I hope that you will see that God is certainly able to teach you the good and the right way, through the Lord Jesus Christ when you ask Him for it.

And if you do know Christ, I hope that you will see, in partaking of the Lord’s Supper this morning, the value of your remembering what He has done, and what He is doing for you day by day to uphold you in your faith, and keep you all the way to glory. This is why Jesus died, so that God could show mercy to all who call upon His name. There are 3 ways that God through His angels showed mercy to Lot on that day so long ago.

The 1st is this – They gave Lot and his relatives fair warning.

It is the mercy of the Lord that He warns men of the judgments that He must bring. God warns us so that we will not perish eternally in the lake of fire at the last day, the day of judgment. What is taking place in this chapter is a picture of what will happen to all who will not repent of their sins. Warnings are negative promises of God. We like to receive all the promises of God’s blessings, but we do not like to receive the promise of God’s judgments if we are an unbeliever.

Sometimes Christians fall into this mentality as well. But just as certainly as the judgment came upon Sodom in that day; just as surely is the judgment coming upon those in our day who will not repent of their sins. We need to understand this morning that God’s warnings are the sure indication of His mercy for sinners like ourselves. Many people do not understand what their sin has done to them, and where it is leading them.

Many people do not understand that they are born with a sinful nature. You may have been terribly cute and cuddly as a little child, your parents may have thought of you as a tender and

beautiful little thing and called you “precious”; but if they know the Lord, they also know that in that little mind and heart of yours is someone who does not know God, or want God, or any of His ways. There is something within you, there in your heart, that as you grow, it will cause you to want to make your own decisions and to do your own thing, and not listen when they tell you that you do not know God and have eternal life because you are a rebel and love your own way and not God’s.

Your parents, if they love God and you, they try to tell you about the pull of the world and the problem of your heart; that sometimes your heart gives in to that pull, but something still draws you to think that the world’s self-oriented thinking and reasoning, its sensuality and boastful pride are something that you can participate in, and God will not mind. But God is a God who solemnly warns all men everywhere to repent; sinners who are great sinners and sinners who are seemingly small sinners.

Sinners we all are, and we need to be warned, to turn away from our sin because God will bring His judgments and His punishments, if not in this life, most certainly at the last day. Every true Christian needs to keep turning from all sin as their lives go on, from the moment of their conversion. If they do not turn they will be chastened by the Lord, so that they will not be condemned along with the world. Lot needed this warning.

True Christians who will toy with the world and who constantly live with worldly and sensual attitudes, and who tolerate those influences upon their heart, and still think that they are secure, need to be warned. You cannot be a “carnal Christian”, as a true Christian, without chastening. God loves you too much to leave you in your sin. But He may let you go on in it for awhile, and give you time to repent. You may be thinking that all is fine; grace will cover it all, and yet He will still be faithful to warn you.

He will be faithful to teach you, and faithful to chasten you where you need it. He will be patient, but He will not let you continue in it, as the practice which you think is allowable. Do you see this my beloved brethren? Why will you grieve the Holy Spirit who is within you? Just because you are a Christian does not mean that you cannot compromise with the world. You are called to overcome the world and the flesh and the devil, not to be overcome by them. This is why the Lord warns you. And he would also have you warn those close to you whom you love as well. “Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city.”

See his mercy to Lot’s unbelieving sons-in-law. “Do you have anyone else here? Son-in-law, your daughters and whomever you have in the city- ‘Take them out of this place!’” What a gracious warning! But when Lot said this to them, he seemed to them to be joking. My friends, never think for a moment that somehow the Lord is not in dead earnest about His warnings. He does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked. And He takes no delight in seeing the family and the estate of a believer lost and destroyed because they have come to think that it is alright to live so close to those who are so perverse.

If Lot’s soul was vexed by the filthy conduct of the people around him, as it says in 2nd Peter 2: 8, why did he not move out and away from them? He rationalized it somehow to himself. But obviously the Lord was not pleased with his rationalizations. We need to take heed to the warnings of God’s Word. When He decides that it has been long enough that a city or a person continues in sin, then He will stop for no one unless He has purposes of mercy. Warnings are God’s mercy. They are meant to lead us to repentance.

The 2nd way that God through His angels showed mercy to Lot was that He took hold of his hand when He lingered. (verses 15, 16)

I love J.C. Ryle’s sermon on Lot’s lingering, in his book entitled “Holiness.” He begins in this way: “Lot’s character is put before us in one little word- ‘He lingered.’” “Who is this man that lingered?” “It is the nephew of faithful Abraham.” “And when did he linger?” “The very morning Sodom was to be destroyed. And where did he linger?” “Within the walls of Sodom itself.” “And before whom did he linger?” “Under the eyes of the two angels who were sent to bring him out of the city.” “Even then he lingered!”

He goes on to say, "There are many children of God who appear to know far more than they live up to, and see far more than they practice, and yet continue in this state for many years." "Wonderful that they go as far as they do, and yet go no further!" "They acknowledge the Head, even Christ, and love the truth. They like sound preaching, and assent to every article of Gospel doctrine, when they hear it." "But still there is an indescribable something which is not satisfactory about them."

"They are constantly doing things which disappoint the expectations of their ministers, and of more advanced Christian friends." "Marvelous that they should think as they do, and yet stand still!" "They believe in heaven, and yet seem faintly to long for it; and in hell and yet seem little to fear it." "They love the Lord Jesus; but the work they do for Him is small." "They hate the devil; but they often appear to tempt him to come to them." "They know the time is short; but they live as if it were long."

"They know they have a battle to fight; yet a man might think they were at peace." "They know they have a race to run; yet they often look like people sitting still." "They know the Judge is at the door, and there is wrath come; and yet they appear half asleep." "Astonishing they should be what they are, and yet be nothing more!" "And what shall we say of these people?" "They often puzzle godly friends and relations." "They often cause great anxiety."

"They often give rise to great doubts and searchings of heart." "But they may be classed under one sweeping description; they are the brothers and sisters of Lot" "They linger." "These are they who get the notion into their minds that it is impossible for all believers to be so very holy and very spiritual!" "They allow that eminent holiness is a beautiful thing." "They like to read about it in books, and even to see it occasionally in others." "But they do not think that all are meant to aim at so high a standard." "At any rate, they seem to make up their minds that it is beyond their reach."

Now that is quite a quote, and I am sure that there are many people here today who agree with it. But the question is, What are we going to do about it in regard to ourselves? Well I think that the answer is that we have got to stop thinking of spiritual things as boring and worldly, and earthly activities as exciting in themselves. There is a depth of joy and excitement in the spiritual things of the heart that has got to come into all that we do, in every aspect of our lives. It comes through the grace of Christ and communion with him in our soul. It comes by faith in Him.

I sometimes think that we have the idea that really, after all, people who live for themselves and the world, people who are always pursuing worldly fun and games, are really having the best time. We really come to believe that spending time with such people, in their worldly sports activities and their worldly entertainments is much better than spending it with God's people. "What a relief to be done with the sermon and out of church." "I need it, I think to myself, but I feel freer now that it is done." I call that putting your time in, in church. I do not believe that if you have this attitude, and it translates into your regular practice, that you have begun to understand the true joy and excitement of the Christian life. "The world is passing away and the lusts thereof, but the one who does the will of God abides forever."

What does the worldling have when all the games and activities are over? He has pictures and memories, but he has no future. He has had good times in a self pleasing sense, without God in them! How close to the most exciting thing in this life he is, but he not there yet! It is having God with us and separation from moral filth, and cultivating the personal relationship with Christ that makes every activity joyful, even the most difficult and the most tedious ones. Even the most painful ones. Lot had not learned this lesson. He lingered. Oh I plead with you today, do not be a lingerer like Lot was, and miss out on the greatest of blessings.

When a person lingers he is not looking forward to heaven and being with Christ. He is not pursuing holiness as he should. He is not trying deliberately to cultivate the kind of inner life and spirit of holiness that the Lord is pleased with. You and I who know Christ must get beyond the superficiality of all the thinking of the world, and its false reasoning for everything that it promotes. We must become people of prayer and principled obedience to God's Word, but especially in the sense that we learn by grace to enjoy it. Then we will not linger.

But what a merciful God we have is seen in the action of the two angels who “took hold of his hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him outside the city.” God appointed the angels to show Lot this mercy. Do you realize that this is what God does for each one who is his child? You see this in Isaiah 41:11-13: “Behold, all those who were incensed against you shall be ashamed and disgraced; they shall be as nothing, and those who strive with you shall perish. You shall seek them and not find them- those who contended against you shall be as nothing, as a nonexistent thing. For I, the Lord your God will hold your right hand, saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you.’”

What is the basis of such mercy? Surely it is nothing in Lot! Surely it is nothing in you and me! Surely it is the mercy of God which we find in the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 10 of chapter 41 answers the question. “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God, I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” The Lord Jesus Christ is God’s righteous right hand. This is the mercy of the Lord to take us by the hand and lead us out of situations which would either harm us or destroy us. It is His mercy to do it this when we linger in the ways of worldly thinking. What a faithful Covenant keeping God He is! Let us remember this as we come down to partake of the Lord’s Supper.

The 3rd way that God by His angels showed mercy to Lot is that He worked to overcome Lot’s fears about leaving Sodom. (verses 17-25)

The angels give Lot and his family strict instructions about leaving Sodom; instructions that they expected them to follow implicitly. “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain.” Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.” But Lot wants to protest the matter. “Please no, my lords!” He recognizes the favor that he has been shown and that fact that they have “increased their mercy shown to him by saving his life,” but he says, “I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die.”

What a truly strange and extraordinary thing that a sinful man like Lot thinks that he knows better than the angels what he should do. I suppose that there will always be weak Christians who will think that they know better than God what the best course of action for them is. Lot says, “See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.”

Sometimes we feel that we just have to be in the place of a little human company. If I cannot have the fast life of the city, then give me the ability to converse and trade with those in a small city. But I would say to you, it is not a good thing when we are always thinking that we have to bargain with God to get our own way. It indicates that we still think that we cannot really live in accordance with God has laid out. We have to modify it, or change His directions to suit our conception. This seems to me to be the same spirit that had brought him to Sodom in the first place.

And yet, the angel grants it to him; he works with Lot’s fears. I would have you to remember that there are more than a few Christians who are often a bundle of conflicting thoughts and emotions in relation to following God’s instructions for their life implicitly. Why can’t we simply accept what God says verbatim, without inserting something of our own selfish thoughts? Why is it that we think that God’s providential will has to be modified to suit our fancy?

And yet, astonishingly, we find the angel bears patiently with Lot in order to attain his purpose. “See I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken.” What amazing grace. Will you not remember that the Lord will work with you in regard to your fears? Lot was afraid that some evil would overtake him by going to the mountains, and that he would die. His fears were unreasonable and unfounded.

But God through the angel worked with him in regard to his fears so that come to a more complete obedience. Let us understand that God’s purpose is not to force people to do what He commands, but to convince them that His perception of things is right, so that they will willingly obey Him, implicitly obey Him, because they know that everything that He says and does is right. He will do the same for you, as you bring up your fears before Him; those fears which are

unfounded, but which He knows must be addressed, and must be assuaged.

God is full of tender mercy for His people, even in the midst of His judgments upon wicked men. Let us remember this, as we partake of these elements, and let us be thankful to our God for giving us Christ. Let us learn to heed Him when He warns us, and learn to take His hand when He extends it to us. Let us remember that this is why our Savior died – to deliver us from ourselves and delivering us from all of our sins.