

Genesis 19: 1-11; “The Man Lot; Righteous but Helpless”, Sermon # 55 in the series – “Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 23rd, 2012, in the Morning Worship Service.

When we look at the man Lot, here in Sodom, having to be rescued for the 2nd time because of the poor decisions that he made, we are tempted to question whether he was a righteous man at all. Do righteous men need to be rescued from themselves? I hope that you will know and understand that sometimes it is so. There are sinful weaknesses in many a righteous man which lead him eventually to the place where it must be proven to the satisfaction of God, angels and other men that he is indeed righteous.

“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’”(2nd Timothy 2: 19) We see here with Lot, that when a righteous man has willingly permitted himself to live too close to men of perverse and depraved minds, it renders him helpless to deliver himself from their wicked schemes. It will take the intervention of God to deliver him, but the Lord knows how to do this. In this particular case He used His angels to intervene and rescue Lot and his family.

The question that I want to ask this morning is this: “What will it take on the part of the angels who are representing God, to deliver Lot from the wicked schemes of perverted men? And what can we learn from this rescue mission of the angels? I assert to you this morning that it will take intervention, great perception and decisive action on the part of the angels to rescue Lot. And I believe that you and I can learn from these angels 3 lessons related to our intervening in the lives of people who need to be turned from the error of their ways back to the path of righteousness.

1st of all – It will take the angels coming very close to Lot, to verify what kind of a person he is. (verses 1-3)

The angels are not simply sent to destroy these cities and no distinction will be made between the righteous and the wicked. It is true that sometimes the righteous and the wicked are taken away in the same natural disaster or national calamity which is a judgment of God upon a wicked society. The Bible says of this in Isaiah 57: 1, “The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.”

God always preserves His people, watches over His people in their life and in their death. In the death of a righteous man, he is always taken permanently away from evil. But when Abraham had this coming judgment on Sodom revealed to him, he prayed and his intercession was effectual for the man Lot. In 1st Peter 2: 9 it says, “The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.” This is what was ordained by God to take place here. God already knew the state of Lot’s heart when he sent the angels to Sodom. He already knew all of Lot’s sinful weaknesses. But there must be a real assessment by the angels who are sent, to make sure of what kind of person that Lot is. His righteousness must be tested and proved.

You should understand that this is something that happens in the lives of every righteous person. In order to do this, God had the angels draw very close to Lot. Here is what they found. When they came into town it was evening and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. He was doing the same kind of thing that Abraham had been doing when he entertained the strangers, unaware that they were angels. He was on the lookout to do good to strangers. He was on the lookout to show hospitality.

This is always a good evidence of man’s being a righteous man; to show kindness and care

for worthy strangers. He was looking out not only for his own interests, but also the interests of others. He had not lived in the city all that long, but he is at the very gate ready to help those who he saw and knew would need help in this wicked city. He showed them great respect by “bowing himself with his face to the ground.” He wanted fellowship and interaction with men of dignity, men who lived by righteous principles, such as he hoped that he perceived in these “men”.

Lot was not a selfish, sensual, or malicious sinner like almost all of the men of that city were. He was a man of good-will, but the angels tested him with it. He had said to them, “Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.” And they said, “No, but we will spend the night in the open square.” This was not uncommon in those days for those who were traveling, to come in to a city and sleep in the defensible area of the town square.

But Lot knew that these “men” would be dreadfully exposed to the wickedness of the men of the city if they did so. It says that Lot insisted strongly that they stay with him, so they turned in and entered his house. And then it says that, “he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.” It is another example of “entertaining angels unawares.” But it proved the kind of man that Lot was. He was a righteous man. We need to remember and understand that God does, at times in our Christian experience, test our righteousness.

We say that we believe in the Lord Jesus. But do we show kindness and concern for the needs of others around us; even strangers? Do we show respect and hospitality to worthy strangers, or are we always thinking of them in terms of what it will cost us to help them? Do we question their motives or see it as an opportunity to serve Christ Himself? And then do we see the other lesson that is here for us?

In order to rescue a righteous person from the sinful weaknesses that they may be bound in, we will have to draw near to them and attempt to verify the good things that God’s grace has done in them as well as to see their weaknesses and faults? This is what not only what angels do, but that is what godly men will do as well.

2nd – The angels did see Lot’s willingness to morally compromise where he should not. (verses 4-8)

Lot is doing everything right so far, but now everything is about to change for him and his family. The reason that it is all about to change is because Lot chose for himself in terms of what he wanted out of this life. He wanted to be a righteous man, but he did not sufficiently consider the strength of the enemies of righteousness; the world, the flesh and the devil. He did not see the sinful weakness of his own heart.

Turn with me over to Genesis chapter 13, verse 11. It says here, “And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar.” “Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east.” “And they separated from each other.” “Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom.” “But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord.”

We need to see the reasons that Lot separated himself from Abraham, and why he chose the way that he did. It was based upon the look of the plain of Jordan, that it was well-watered like the garden of the Lord. At the end of verse 12 it says that he went on and “pitched his tent even as far as Sodom.” You see the progression don’t you? His self pleasing choice, his moving toward a city which was known for its exceeding sinfulness, and then finally his coming to dwell among the wicked inhabitants.

If you will turn with me over to 2nd Peter 2: 7-9 we are shown, there, what a bad decision this was. This decision of Lot’s was based upon a sinful personal weakness; he loved the city life and

he loved the beauty of the plains around it. Nothing wrong with that. He wanted culture and society. Nothing, necessarily, wrong with that. But in this case it was sinful culture and society. And I think that Lot went that direction even though he knew of the reputation of the place. But if he did not know, and came to know of it only when he moved there, why did he not immediately leave?

It appears that there most certainly was a weakness in Lot that God would have to deliver him from. We are told in verse 7 that God...“delivered righteous Lot who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds). He was oppressed because he chose to dwell among them, and he tormented his own soul by deliberately choosing to live around them!

I think that we simply must conclude that it was a sinful weakness in Lot to choose to dwell among them. He is like so many Christians today who are doing the same thing, by continually watching worldly television shows and immoral and wicked movies. They desperately want to believe that worldly and sinfully compromising entertainments are permissible to the true Christian. They think that this kind of exposure to other people’s sins will not dull their spiritual edge. They think that Christians can be and should be able to socialize regularly with world’s pleasures and entertainments. They love the city life and they can’t stand to be alone. This, I think, was the state of Lot and his family.

You and I must ask ourselves whether there is something about culture and society that we are unwilling to give up. Are we tormenting our own souls day after day, defiling ourselves by participating in other men’s sins, by being too near to them, or by watching them defile themselves in movies or on the computer? Let me ask a further question. Are you vexed by what you are seeing or do you secretly like it and want more of it? That is the test for the believer to pass.

The true believer’s soul will be vexed and oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked. An unbeliever who might be professing to be a true believer, will not be vexed or oppressed. Well, the wickedness of the men of the city is about to be revealed, and the sinful weakness and compromise of a godly man is about to be revealed as well. It says in verse 4, “Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house.” “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 know them carnally.’”

If Lot is a good example of hospitality, the inhabitants of Sodom are at the ultimate extreme of wickedness in being inhospitable. It says in 2nd Timothy 3: 13, “Evil men will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” This is a principle of truth that we all need to understand. Evil within the heart of man is something that will grow worse and worse. It is not something within wicked people, that stands still. It may seem to be dormant within them, but while they are in that state, they will deceive ourselves into thinking that they may only have a few sinful problems.

They do not believe that there will be progression downward in their contemplation and meditation upon it. It is not so. If you are evil by nature your course is progressively downwards unless it is stopped; unless it is checked and dealt with by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even righteous men are instructed in 1st Corinthians 10: 12, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” How easily, even we as Christians, are deceived in regard to the nature of the sin which dwells within us. Lot’s response to these wicked men shows both genuine piety and sinful weakness.

In verse 6 it says, “So Lot went out to them through the doorway, and shut the door behind him.” What a gracious protective host he was to these two men that he did not know! Look at how he reasons with these aggressive homosexuals and pleads with them to “not do so

wickedly!” But their sin will not be tamed by his gentle words. And he senses the strength of their numbers, all of them demanding what their filthy minds were craving. At this point Lot caves in to them and thinks that he can appease their desire with a lesser evil than what they request. He tells them that he has two virgin daughters, and then actually says that he is willing to bring them out to this perverse crowd that they may do to them as they wish. This only fuels their passion and rage against Lot, to despise his sinful and foolish reasoning, realizing that they can easily overcome all of his objections and his physical strength to resist them. “This one,” they say, “came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them.”

Now let us pause here and see where moral weakness in a righteous man leads to. If these were actual men who had come into Lot’s house, instead of angels, all would have been lost at once. I think that now perhaps Lot finally understood where all of his poor choices had brought him. They had brought him to the loss of everything he valued and held dear in his life. This is where poor moral choices lead us; to consequences of the worst sort. They lead to our having to try to deal with the sins of people who are perverse. Bad company corrupts good morals. The text says, “So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to breaking down the door.” Notice the deliberate use of the words “the man Lot” by the Holy Spirit in our text.

It was Lot’s inability to deal with this situation; the state of helplessness that he had brought himself into, that led him to this awful point in his life. He knew that he could not change the nature of evil in even one person in the city of Sodom. He could not hold back the tide of evil in these wicked men. And his compromise with their evil intent had only made matters worse. When will we ever learn that we as Christians cannot permit a lesser level of perversity in society in order to stave off a greater level of perversity? We cannot agree to give people in our society the right to have on-line pornography without expecting to have homosexual rights fast on the heels of it.

We must, as Christians stand fast against all sexual sin right from the start. We must declare categorically that we will not approve of it in any place in our society. Our problem is, that in the generation of the 1960s that I grew up in, that we “broke down the door” of our society’s sexual morality and forced a “new morality” on our parent’s generation. It was free love with no strings of commitment attached. And so, immediately, as a response, homosexuality came out of the closet in 1970 and wanted to be included in the homecoming parade at the University of Iowa. I was there and saw it with my own eyes.

As a generation, many of us having embraced “free love” without the commitment of marriage, we could not hold back the torrent of free sexual expression which would break down the door of all decency, and which would attempt to force itself on everyone in society, especially Christ’s true church. We are now having to endure the consequences of what we tolerated or wanted then, those of us who had these sinful weaknesses. We, as a society, cannot expect to be delivered from this plague without our repenting of these sins, and pleading with God that He would be merciful.

But God must be praised for His mercy, that He did lead many a Christian out of this vile plague which has come upon our society. And every sinner, and every weak Christian, will find forgiveness through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as they resist the onslaught of sexual evil in our society. God knows how to deliver the righteous from temptation.

3rd – The angels now knew what they must do to deal with this perversity and rescue Lot.

The “men” who were angels had now verified Sodom’s wickedness. So when they saw that these wicked men could push Lot far enough to sinfully compromise, they knew that they needed to act. It says in verses 10 and 11, “But the men reached out their hands and pulled 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 became weary trying to find the door.” They had the power given them from God to render a judicial and actual blindness on these men. The Lord Himself would also render the judgment of death upon them by raining down fire and brimstone upon them, from heaven. We as Christians do not have that kind of power. There are judgments upon wickedness in a society that men acting as a collective body can render through laws being enacted and suitable punishments meted out; and then there are judgments upon wickedness that only God can render.

The sin of Sodom had gone beyond human remedy, because there were not 10 righteous people in that city. God is a righteous Judge and He will come at the right time and in the right way to rescue His people. And you and I, if we would be helpers to the people who have rendered themselves helpless by their own sinful weakness, must be perceptive enough to know when to act as well. We must learn to study and see where people who say that they are Christians, are failing to discern the truth. And we must attempt to “reach out our hands and pull them into the place of safety with us.”

We must show them that it is not Christian love to tolerate the sin of homosexual perversity under the guise that this sin is something that they are born with. It is not discrimination against the supposed rights of homosexuals to hate that sin and take steps to teach our children that God will punish such people forever in hell; those who engage in it and will not repent. If necessary we must be willing to do what it says in Jude 22 and 23. “And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.”

This is the kind of wise discernment that the angels had, and this, too, is what we must have. Our telling people that homosexuality is a sin that will be judged by God, is not “hate-speech”, but rather loving counsel that perhaps God will use to save people from error and perhaps even their souls from eternal death. Sometimes even Christians wander from the truth. James 5: 19 says, “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders away from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”

This rescue mission conducted by the holy angels, to bring Lot out of the coming certain destruction of Sodom is certainly no less our rescue mission to erring Christians and unbelievers; people who we hope will be given grace to change their minds about the sins of Sodom before it is too late. I am thankful that God will not let one of His Elect people perish, and He knows full well how to deliver the godly out of temptations and reserve the unjust under punishment, whether it is in this life or the life to come.