

BFFs FOREVER

Studies in the Life of Abraham

Text

Genesis 19:1-38

Topic

Sexual sins are the backdrop for God's judgment upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah

Title

"Sex & the Cities"

Introduction

I want to be certain we are not becoming spiritually desensitized.

Perhaps an example of being desensitized would help. Let's pick on television or, as some Christians like to call it, *Hellivision*.¹

In a survey of scientific studies and findings, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation confidently stated the following in a report of the effects of television violence upon children.

Based on the cumulative evidence of studies conducted over several decades, the scientific and public health communities overwhelmingly conclude that viewing violence poses a harmful risk to children. Viewing television violence can lead to... increased antisocial or aggressive behavior [and] **desensitization** to violence (i.e., becoming more accepting of violence in real life and less caring about other people's feelings)...

People were becoming spiritually desensitized way before television. Abraham's nephew, Lot, may, in fact, be the poster boy for spiritual desensitization. He had become so desensitized in Sodom that he had lost any real sense of being separated from the world.

For his part, Abraham was separated and refused to become desensitized.

¹ Check out these stats: <http://www.parentstv.org/ptc/facts/mediafacts.asp>

Obviously we want to be Abraham's and not be Lot's. Let's therefore ask ourselves these two questions: #1 Are You Desensitized & Refusing To Be Separated?, or #2 Are You Separated & Refusing To Be Desensitized?

#1 Are You Desensitized
& Refusing To Be Separated?

(v1-14 & 30-38)

Our story begins with the evening arrival of two visitors to Sodom.

Genesis 19:1 Now 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 he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.

Genesis 19:2 And he said, "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."

Genesis 19:3 But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

These two angels had been dispatched to deliver Lot and his family from Sodom on the eve of its destruction from Heaven by God.

Lot insisted that they receive his hospitality. Abraham had done the same a chapter earlier. Lot was acting just like Uncle Abraham. He seemed every bit as spiritual.

It could be argued that Lot was far more successful than his uncle. "Sitting in the gate" of a city was an indication that you were one of the leaders. It was at the gates of the city where disputes were heard and decisions were rendered. While Abraham remained an itinerant nomad, Lot had risen to a place of prominence.

Many Christians look like Lot. They seem spiritual. And they enjoy the outward success of the world.

Just beneath the surface we're going to see that although Lot was certainly better than the world around him, he had become so spiritually desensitized that if we didn't have the testimony of Abraham and the apostle Peter calling him "righteous" we'd conclude he was unsaved.

Genesis 19:4 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.

Genesis 19:5 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."

Genesis 19:6 So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, Genesis 19:7 and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly!

Genesis 19:8 See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof."

Genesis 19:9 And they said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them." So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door.

Genesis 19:10 But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door.

Genesis 19:11 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.

There can be no disputing that the men of Sodom were homosexual and/or bisexual and wanted to rape these two visitors. Otherwise what was Lot's point in offering his virgin daughters in their stead?

There can also be no honest disputing that homosexuality is condemned in the Bible as sin. Any attempts to justify it as a behavior from the Bible involve denying and/or destroying the precise words of Scripture.

God intends sex to be celebrated and enjoyed in a marriage between one man and one woman for life. Biblical marriage is heterosexual and monogamous. Within those boundaries, "marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled" (Hebrews 13:4).

God is no prude when it comes to marital sex. One whole book of the Bible is dedicated to the romance of courtship and the consummation of marriage in the marriage bed. God portrays marital sex as a joyous blessing without blushing.

Having said that, the men of Sodom are *not* the main characters in this narrative. Lot and his family are the main characters. So today I'm not talking *to* or *about* homosexuals. **I'm talking to Christians about becoming desensitized.**

Honestly, the thing that strikes me most in this story was Lot's willingness to offer them his two virgin daughters to be raped by them. Apparently he felt it was a lesser sexual sin.

If we are not careful we can become desensitized and think that there are lesser sexual sins we can commit while at the same time condemning others as heinous.

Any and all sexual activity that is **outside** the beautiful and protective boundaries of biblical marriage is sin. That would include homosexuality, for sure, but also pornography and premarital sex and adultery as well.

Christians are adamant about making their feelings known regarding homosexuality. Accurate or not, homosexuals who need salvation in Jesus Christ feel that Christian hate them.

But if studies and statistics are accurate, **several other sexual sins listed in the Bible are pretty prevalent in the church among the saints.**

- Almost every poll taken shows that 50% or more of Christian men admit to viewing pornography on a regular basis. And lots of women do, too.
- Premarital sex is certainly not uncommon among believers.
- According to *The Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, "an astounding 50-65 percent of husbands and 45-55 percent of wives have had extramarital affairs by the time they are 40."

I'm not concluding anything or even suggesting anything. I'm just wondering if we are not somewhat like Lot if we have become desensitized and only rail against certain sexual sins while committing others. If that's the case, we need to become separated again to God's immutable standards. We need to return to biblical sexual purity. In plain terms, we need to see the porn and premarital sex and adultery stats go way down in the church.

Lot was also desensitized to what I would call spiritual urgency.

Genesis 19:12 Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city - take them out of this place!

Genesis 19:13 For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it."

Genesis 19:14 So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

Besides his two unmarried daughters, Lot had at least two and maybe three married daughters. When he went to warn them and their husbands, they thought it was a joke. They scoffed at the thought of God's impending judgment.

Apparently they had never before seen in Lot a sense of urgency with regard to spiritual things. Lot had let at least twenty years go by living in Sodom putting God on the back burner, so to speak. He had no conversions among the godless Sodomites and he had little conversation about God with members of his own family.

It's easy to put spiritual things on the back burner, is it not? In fact, the world designs strategies to keep you busy and get you doing anything besides prayer, the study of the Word, and attending church. If you're not careful you will give your children the impression that there is nothing urgent about seeking the Lord or studying His Word or joining with His people as often as possible. They see by your example that it can wait.

If that is what you've done or are doing, then you are desensitized to the spiritual urgency of "redeeming the time because the days are evil."

The angels are going to drag Lot, Mrs. Lot, and the two unmarried girls out of town and *then* the cities will be destroyed. To follow our theme, I want to skip to verses thirty through thirty-eight.

Genesis 19:30 Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave.

Genesis 19:31 Now the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth.

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Genesis 19:32 Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father."

Genesis 19:33 So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

Genesis 19:34 It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, "Indeed I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father."

Genesis 19:35 Then 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.

Genesis 19:36 Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.

Genesis 19:37 The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day.

Genesis 19:38 And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the people of Ammon to this day.

This is ugly and vile. Without overlooking or minimizing the sin of incest, Lot's problem on these two nights was that he got drunk.

We've talked about alcohol many times. I always point out that the Bible does not condemn drinking, only drunkenness. Then I ask if someone can actually determine for me what it means to be "drunk." Is it the first sign of a buzz? Or is it when you finally pass out?

I'm just speculating here, but I don't think Lot was a regular drunk. He drank, that's clear; and he got drunk - blind drunk. **What I'm getting at is that drinking alcohol is the best way I know for a person to become desensitized towards getting drunk!**

If you drink, be very careful you are not becoming desensitized to getting drunk. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit!

The world is out to desensitize you. If you are not careful, you'll become like Lot - ***and I know none of us want that!***

#2 Are You Separated
& Refusing To Be Desensitized?
(v15-29)

Let's get back to the angels dragging Lot out of Sodom.

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Genesis 19:15 When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city."

Genesis 19:16 And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.

Genesis 19:17 So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed."

Genesis 19:18 Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords!

Genesis 19:19 Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die.

Genesis 19:20 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."

Genesis 19:21 And he said to him, "See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken.

Genesis 19:22 Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

Genesis 19:23 The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar.

By telling Lot to flee to the mountains the angels were encouraging him to become spiritually separated from the world.

Lot lingered, then balked, at the idea of fleeing to the mountains, wanting instead to go to one of the other cities of the plains. If he couldn't live in Sodom, he'd live in Zoar. After all, it was only a "little" city. In other words, it wasn't big, bad Sodom and, since God wasn't going to rain fire down on it, he could live there, couldn't he? Yeah, he *could*, **but he shouldn't**.

Genesis 19:24 Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens.

Genesis 19:25 So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

Modern archaeology has unearthed Sodom and Gomorrah, only the scientific communities call them Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira because they are reluctant to admit the Bible is the Word of God.

"By 1924 [archaeologists] became convinced of the possibility of some ancient inhabited area near the barren eastern bank of the Dead Sea. [An] expedition had found some

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meager remains of an early Bronze Age structure assumed to have been a fortress or temple. It was located on a mound, known as Bab edh-Dhra...

"In the 1960s, a large cemetery was discovered near Bab edh-Dhra. Archeologist Paul Lapp spent three seasons excavating the area where he unearthed a great number of shaft-tombs - possibly as many as 20,000. (A shaft-tomb is a vertical hole, about 3 feet in diameter, dug into the rocky ground to a depth of approximately 6 feet.) At the bottom of each shaft were 1-5 horizontal shallow shafts, each containing between 1-6 bodies. In addition, there were a number of mud-brick buildings, charnel houses that are repositories for bones or bodies of the dead. Each charnel house contained the remains of several hundred people.

"Current estimates of the number of bodies occupying that cemetery is about a half million! The great number of corpses in a single burial ground is evidence of a major population.

"Between 1973 and 1979, four more "cities" to the south of Bab edh-Dhra were found. Their Arabic names are Numeira, Safi, Feifa, and Khanazir. The surrounding area has been thoroughly explored and no other cities have been found, only these five [just like the Bible says].

"Numeira was excavated for two seasons... Perhaps the most interesting find was the remains of a winery with 4000-year-old whole grapes were still there, preserved by the arid desert climate. [This validates] Moses [reference] to the vineyards of Sodom, "For their vine is of the vine of Sodom and of the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter" (Deuteronomy 32:32).

"The entire areas of Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira are covered with a spongy ash. These two cities show clear signs of utter destruction. The layer of ash ranges from 4-20 inches in depth. Parallel to these five cities is fault line where two large plates of earth are exerting great pressure on each other. This tectonic feature has caused a number of earthquakes in the region. The pressure can also force subterranean matter, such as magma, or, in this case, bitumen into the air. Geologists suggest that... the earth spewed forth flammable hydrocarbons high into the atmosphere. These were ignited by lightning or some other natural source and the flaming debris fell back to earth."²

Genesis 19:26 But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

"Looked back" is believed by some to mean *returned or lagged behind*. Her heart was in Sodom.

² <http://www.aish.com/ci/sam/48931527.html?mobile=yes&c=y>

We refer to people as 'pillars' sometimes. Salt is a preservative and, in the Bible, it symbolizes the effect a believer ought to have on the surrounding culture. We are to *preserve* godliness and *prevent* spiritual decay. Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of salt was a monument to what she ought to have been but was not - God's pillar of salt in that lost society.

Lot was desensitized and, in the end, refused to be separated from the world. Abraham remained separated, refusing to be desensitized.

Genesis 19:27 And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord.

Genesis 19:28 Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace.

Genesis 19:29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.

Earlier in the story Abraham had rescued the inhabitants of Sodom and refused to take any of the spoil. He made a conscious, willful choice to remain separated. It meant nomadic living in tents - having no lasting possessions or any position in this world.

But it 'positioned' him with God in such a way that his prayers were heard and he was spared the vexing of his righteous soul. And instead of accumulating a few possessions, he would have a vast spiritual inheritance.

As you get ready for re-entry to the places God has strategical scattered you in the world:

- Choose daily to remain separated.
- Be extra sensitive to becoming desensitized.