

Introduction

^ The streets of the city are dangerous after dark. It is wise to stay safely indoors, out of harm's way, as gangs gather to pursue their malicious mischief.

Am I talking about Sodom? or Chicago? Gomorrah? or Los Angeles?

%o Homosexuality, once thought of as perverted, has become prevalent. No longer ashamed, homosexuals parade openly through the city and demand constitutionality for what was once criminal.

Am I talking about Sodom? or San Francisco? Gomorrah? or Hollywood?

There is a sobering quotation, attributed to Evangelist Billy Graham, that says, "If God fails to judge the United States, then He owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology."

God won't be apologizing to Sodom and Gomorrah anytime soon! But He *may* act in judgment upon the United States, as He has consistently throughout human history whenever a society's sins are so great that their outcry can no longer be restrained by His longsuffering.

Is the United States ripe for God's judgment? If it is, how should *you* live as God's judgment draws near? Genesis Eighteen and Nineteen help you to answer these important questions.

#1 As God's Judgment Draws Near,
Judge Your Society By God's Standards

#2 As God's Judgment Draws Near,
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Abraham, in Genesis 18:25, identifies God as "the Judge of all the earth." God is the Judge of nature and nations, of institutions and individuals.

We are thinking of our own nation while we are looking at Sodom and Gomorrah. By what standards does God judge nations? If we can identify them, we can judge our own society.

The society that is ripe for God's judgment is described by the Apostle Paul in the first chapter of Romans, in verses eighteen through thirty-two:

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Romans 1:19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Romans 1:21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Romans 1:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

Romans 1:23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man; and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Romans 1:24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,

Romans 1:25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Romans 1:26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

Romans 1:27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

Romans 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

Romans 1:29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers,

Romans 1:30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

Romans 1:31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;

Romans 1:32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Paul says that God is right in judging men and women who practice these things, and we infer that a society that can be described this way is itself ripe for God's judgment.

Romans One describes a whole spectrum of iniquities, sins, and depravities. One word that summarizes it would be "corrupt"; as Paul says in verse twenty-three, they exchanged the standards of the "incorruptible God" for their own corrupt standards. Let's pick out just two prominent corruption's from these verses to judge our own society by.

v In verse twenty-nine, as the list of corruption's multiplies, you read of "...murder..." When the corruption of "murder" characterizes a society, the outcry of its victims reaches heaven in such a way that judgment can no longer be restrained by God's longsuffering.

Does "murder" characterize the United States? The rest of the world thinks so...Just ask those countries whose tourists have been murdered in Florida. You don't have to go to Florida; Fresno is breaking records for murder as well.

I might be accused of sensationalizing "murder" to make my point. A critic would point out that most murders are not like the ones I've cited.

That's true; most murders are not like the ones I've cited. Most murders are, in fact, legal. Most murders by far are legal abortions. The United States *is* characterized

by the awful corruption of murder. If "murder" is a standard by which God judges a society, we are ready for judgment to fall.

v The verses in Romans One mention several sexual perversions, giving special emphasis to male and female homosexuality:

Romans 1:26-27 "... their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."

Homosexual sex is a corruption. Its practice in the United States, however, has gone from being criminal to being condoned, and may soon go from being condoned to being protected constitutionally. When the corruption of "homosexuality" characterizes a society, the outcry reaches heaven in such a way that judgment can no longer be restrained by God's longsuffering.

There are those who try to justify homosexuality by adjusting God's standards. The first important attempt to redefine God's standards was a book by the English writer D. Sherwin Bailey entitled *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, published in 1955.¹ Bailey argues that the inhabitants of Sodom did not intend a homosexual rape of the angels, and that the real sin of Sodom was in violating the duty of hospitality to strangers. He regards other verses that explicitly condemn homosexual activity as only condemning homosexual promiscuity. Bailey's arguments are still used today.

Bailey and those who think like him are wrong. It is clear from the terrible offer by Lot of his daughters that the men of Sodom wanted to rape the angels. As to the rest of the biblical texts condemning homosexuality, there is no possible way to read any of them as speaking only of promiscuous behavior. For example,

v Leviticus 18:22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It *is* an abomination.

v Leviticus 20:13 If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood *shall be* upon them.

v 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

The United States is more and more being characterized by the awful corruption of homosexuality. If "homosexuality" is a standard by which God judges a society, we are ready for judgment to fall.

If you judge a society by God's standards you have to conclude that the United States is corrupt and ripe for judgment. God is restraining His judgment for the sake of the few righteous. The Church on earth is the reason why the United States still exists.

¹cited by James Montgomery Boice, Genesis (Volume 2).

Since that is so, you would be wise to judge God's Church on earth by His standards. A comparison of Abraham and Lot reveals some of those standards for your encouragement and exhortation.

#2 As God's Judgment Draws Near, Judge Yourself By God's Standards

The way of *your* society is the way of corruption. You can follow the way of Lot, or you can follow the way of Abraham. Let's look at Lot first.

, The Way Of Lot Is Carnality

In a previous study we identified Lot as a carnal Christian. Other words for "carnal" are fleshly and worldly. Here in Chapter Nineteen we see four characteristics of the carnal Christian:

v Compromise is characteristic of the carnal Christian

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.

The men who "sat in the gates" of the city in Old Testament times were the leaders and judges of their community. Lot had *risen* to a place of prominence, but his "rising up" was a compromise. The angels at first refuse his fellowship. When they do accept, they will eat only "unleavened bread." Leaven, the substance that causes bread to rise, is a symbol of corruption. The presence of leaven corrupts the lump of dough. Lot's "rising-up" to a prominent place of leadership was like leaven which causes bread to rise - a compromise with the corruption of the city.

Today, especially in media and the arts, Christians are trying to "cross-over" in order to have a greater influence. Jeff Nicholson, former Christian recording artist and founder of Living Epistles Witness Wear, once told me, "If you're going to cross-over, *make sure you bring the Cross over!*"

v Complicity is characteristic of the carnal Christian

Complicity means you are an accomplice to evil; it is associating with improper or immoral activity. Lot seeks to comply with the men of Sodom in their perverted sexual lusts in a way that seems unthinkable to us.

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.

Lot thought that raping his virgin daughters was less sinful than raping angels from heaven. The incident shows how far you can go once you decide to comply with sin. Something that is itself absolutely heinous becomes acceptable when compared to a grosser perversion.

The carnal Christian is in grave danger of becoming desensitized to sin. Things that ought to cause you to blush have become commonplace. There is a tendency to comply with lesser evils in order to not appear "prudish" or Puritanical. Compliance is a key strategy that the devil employs to overthrow your Christian testimony.

v Contradiction is characteristic of the carnal Christian

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.

Lot's testimony was a hypocritical contradiction to his married daughters and their husbands. If God's judgment was so certain, how is it that Lot came to be prominent in Sodom? Why had he allowed his daughters to marry sinful men, not of his faith? How could he condone the potential rape of his other daughters? These contradictions - and probably many others - voided any testimony he sought to have with his closest family.

v Comfort is characteristic of the carnal Christian

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.

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.

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

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.

Lot "lingered," even though he himself believed the message of judgment... He had to be dragged by the hand out of the city. Even then he pleaded to be allowed to go to another close-by *city* - - itself probably exceedingly wicked. He had no thought of returning to Abraham. He had grown comfortable. He preferred the comfort of the city to the constraints of his heavenly citizenship. He would rather sit in the gates of Zoar and endanger his soul than sit in his tent and experience fellowship with God.

The comforts that this corrupt society offers can certainly interfere with your progress as a Christian. The carnal Christian makes decisions based on creature comforts rather than on spiritual principles.

What about Mrs. Lot? She looked back and was rained on by the fire and brimstone, turning her into a solid pillar of salt. She stood there, a monument to the decision of the heart to long after the things of this world even while its citizens were perishing. You see, she should have been *spiritual* salt to those people, but she had lost her flavor and her ability to act as a preservative.

The carnal Christian sees first to his or her own worldly comfort. The things the carnal Christian acquires - possessions and positions - can be monuments to the decisions of the heart to lust after the things of the world even while its citizens are perishing. The things of this world can harden you towards those who are perishing without the knowledge of Jesus Christ. You become a "pillar of salt" as you look lustfully towards the world.

v Carelessness is characteristic of the carnal Christian

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.

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 disgusting incestuous sex is made possible by Lot's carelessness. It is amazing to me that, in light of what he had just been through, Lot was not driven to a renewed discipline in his Christian walk. Instead he was careless with his liberty to drink; it turned to the sin of drunkenness; it led to the sin of incest.

God saved Lot...But you should desire more than to be barely saved from the fires of His judgment! You should follow the way of Abraham.

, The Way Of Abraham Is Consecration

Abraham is consecrated - set apart for God's use and separate from the evil society of his day. He undoubtedly had dealings with the evil men of the plains cities. But his dealings with them did not distract him from his devotion, and their sins did not attract his desires. Three things characterize the consecrated Christian:

v Continuance characterizes the consecrated Christian

Genesis 18:16 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way.

Genesis 18:17 And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,

Genesis 18:18 "since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?"

Genesis 18:19 "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

God would preserve Abraham *and* Abraham would persevere. In verse eighteen you read of God's promise to preserve him; verse nineteen speaks of his perseverance. They are independent *and* interdependent at the same time in a mystery that you cannot resolve. The key for you is to recognize that the consecrated Christian is one who continues in the things of his Lord.

v Compassion characterizes the consecrated Christian

In verses twenty through thirty-three of chapter eighteen, Abraham shows his compassion. The amazing thing is that his compassion is towards the wicked Sodomites!

His prayer is that God would *spare* them for the sake of the few righteous. Why not pray that the few righteous could be kept safe while judgment rained on the rest? God's heart is a heart of compassion towards even the vilest of sinners! Better that they continue, even in their sin, as long as there are those who can witness to them of God's longsuffering!

You and I are called upon to have God's compassion on the murderers and homosexuals that comprise our society...On the "unrighteous, the sexually immoral, the wicked, the covetous, the malicious; on those full of envy, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; on the whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, who are disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful, and unforgiving..."

v Concern characterizes the consecrated Christian

Why stop at "ten righteous?" Abraham thought he knew of at least ten righteous people in Sodom. Tradition tells us there dwelt Lot and his wife, their two sons, two married daughters and their husbands, and two unmarried daughters - a total of ten. Abraham's prayer was essentially a concern for revival for a carnal Christian and for repentance for those who had come under the influence of the Gospel.

The righteous are to pray for revival and repentance...

Conclusion

Ten people in Sodom had come under the influence of the Gospel. Ten people knew that you are saved by grace through faith in God's Savior. Six of them perished as unbelievers in the fire and brimstone. Four of them may have been saved:

v The New Testament declares that Lot is a saved man.

v Lot's wife and his two unmarried daughters may have been saved - regardless their heinous behavior. After all, the angels reserved judgment until all four were outside the city.

These ten people illustrate the sad condition of many today! Carnal Christians, and those who have the Gospel but remain corrupt and unconverted.

, If you are following the way of corruption, the wrath of God's judgment will eventually come upon you...

, If you are following the way of carnality, God's chastening will eventually come upon you as it did Lot, his wife, and his two unmarried daughters:

{ Lot is not heard from again; God removes him from service.

{ Lot's wife was killed; in the New Testament you read of believers being taken home to heaven prematurely on account of their sin.

{ Lot's two daughters sin is eventually found out and their children are notorious for their wickedness and immorality.

, Follow the way of consecration!