

Mid-Week Meditation for August 5, 2020

Genesis 19 1-6

This meditation is about the second half of chapter 18 and all of chapter 19. We only read a portion of Chapter 18 last week, but you could read more now if you like. If you reread last week's meditation, you will remember we talked about how the Lord came to call on Abraham and he encountered the Lord, and two of His angels. Three men came to visit Abraham and Sarah. Abraham, knowing that he was in the Lord's presence, acknowledged himself as God's servant and welcomed Him in. And in that encounter, The Lord reassured Abraham and Sarah that within one year, they would have a child. Now last week, we did not talk about the second part of chapter 18. And we have bypassed it as part of the scripture reading for today's lesson. So now you have some homework to do. You see, the Lord's visit has two purposes. The first purpose, was to visit Abraham, and to reassure the doubts in his and Sarah's hearts about the promise of a child and an heir. But the second purpose of the Lord's visit was to see if the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was as bad as the outcry that had reached the ears of the Lord. Since we skipped the reading of the second part of chapter 18, I am going to do my best to summarize it before we move on to the 19th chapter.

The next day after the Lord's visit with Abraham and Sarah, the Lord's angels prepared to head to the plains where Sodom and Gomorrah are located. There is this interesting little conversation between the angels. The two angels were pondering whether they should tell Abraham where they were going next and what they were going to do. Well, the answer to their question was that they would tell Abraham what they were up to. The Lord said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know."

Here, the Lord, I believe, has the desire to give this sinful nation one last chance to give a righteous account for themselves. So, the angels were off to assess the sinfulness of Sodom and Gomorrah. But Abraham remained in the presence of the Lord and he tries to intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah, and perhaps he is concerned about his nephew Lot, who lives in Sodom also. You remember, that Lot and Abraham parted ways. Lot chose to go to the east and ever since, he has lived near, or in Sodom. So, in the next part of Chapter 18, Abraham asks the Lord, "If there are fifty righteous men in Sodom, will you spare the city?" And God says, "Yes, I will spare the whole city if there are 50 righteous men." Then Abraham asks how about 45, and the Lord says, "Yes." And Abraham keeps negotiating all the way down to 10 people. If there are 10 righteous men in Sodom will you spare the city. But it is interesting. It seems that Abraham is concerned about his nephew, but he never really asks the Lord, "Will you save my nephew". He just knows, at this point, that if there are 10 righteous men in Sodom, the city will be spared. My guess is that Abraham was betting there had to be at least 10 righteous people, and so, the goal to intercede for his nephew had been accomplished.

Well, the Lord did not find 10 righteous men in Sodom. It seems that Sodom and Gomorrah were even worse than the outcry had indicated.

At this point, I want to take a step back, and think about this comparison between Lot and Abraham. They both encountered the Lord. And they both welcomed the Lord into their homes, and identified themselves as the Lord's servants, and treated the Lord with due hospitality. And both, in the end, were judged to be righteous; Lot, in fact, was apparently the only one in Sodom. Remember, Abraham and Lot parted ways, only because the land would not support them both. Abraham said you go left and then I will go right. And we know that Lot chose the green and lush plains to the east. And we know that he started out pitching his tent near Sodom, and then later we hear of him being a resident of Sodom. He was one of Sodom's residents who was taken away when Abraham had to rescue Lot in an earlier chapter. And now, he is not only a resident of Sodom, in verse one, of chapter 19, we find him sitting in the gateway of the city. You don't get to sit in the gateway of the city unless you have a leadership role in the city. So, as we compare Abraham and Lot, Abraham is a man of faith. In fact, the Father of our faith.

Lot is a man of compromise. Many years ago, he moved to a land where he knew there was wickedness. And he pitched his tent near that wickedness. Later, his life and his family had been swept up in that wickedness, escaping only because Abraham rescued his family. Lot did not choose to move away from that wickedness, but chose to draw nearer to it to the point, where in this passage we shared, he had to shield the world that he lived in from the Lord. He shut the door and pleaded with his neighbors not to reveal their wicked hearts to the Lord.

From here, there is a whole series of events that happen very quickly. The angels decide that the whole area of Sodom and Gomorrah are irredeemable, and they will be destroyed. So, the angel says, "Is there anyone else that belongs to you? I will spare them." Lot goes and pleads with his future sons-in-law. But they think he is joking and go on about their way. The angels urge the rest of them to go to the mountains outside of town, and don't look back. That is very important advice, as Lot's wife will find out. The angels have to get pretty firm with Lot and his wife and daughters, "Go now. Hurry! Or I will not be able to spare you". And then Lot has the nerve to say, "Not the mountains, how about this little town called Zoar." Well, now the angel must have kind of just roll his eyes. Okay. Okay. Just go, or you are going to be destroyed with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. So, they go to Zoar, and they settle there for a short time. Sodom and Gomorrah are burned to the ground, and all the people are killed instantly. And then Lot's wife looks from Zoar, back to the city of Sodom, and she becomes a pillar of salt. Lot and his daughters become nervous in Zoar. Maybe they will come to know the same fate as Lot's wife. And so, they decide to go to the mountains as they had originally been instructed by the angels. And Lot and his daughters settle in a dark, damp, barren cave. And then, living in this setting for a long time, Lot's daughters decide, that if we are to continue our family line, we must get our father drunk, and come to know him, so that a seed will come from the ashes of this judgement that has come upon our community. And so, they both, become pregnant and bear sons named Moab and Benammi.

Lot lived a life of compromise. And when you live a life of compromise long enough, the compromise becomes normal. If you live a life of compromise long enough, the things you know are wrong begin to find some kind of Biblical justification. Or at the very least, we don't feel we have the strength or the courage or the power to bring about change, and so we grow to accept things that are contrary to the way of righteousness. Lot has gone down the road of compromise, and in this passage where did this road leave him in the end? Remember, the reason that Lot and Abraham separated in the first place, is because they both had so much wealth, and so much livestock, and so many people that the land would not support them. Now from all of that, there are three people left, in a cave. All of his wealth and power are gone. The green plains that he chose many years ago are ashes. His wife is a pillar of salt, his daughters' fiancés, burned to a crisp, because they did not believe Lot when he told them about the Lord and his daughters, used the way of compromise that they had learned to take advantage of Lot for their own selfish purposes. Their son's born from this sinful life of compromise, were the seed of the Moabites and Ammonites, both tribes forever enemies of the Israelite nation, separate from the family of Abraham, their family of origin.

Lot lived a life of compromise; Abraham a life of faith. Not perfect, there were doubts, but when Abraham makes a mistake, it is because he wants God's will so badly that his impatience forces his errors. But his mistakes show him trying to further God's purpose. Lot's life of compromise is a life growing away from the righteousness of God, in pursuit of matters of the world and of the self.

The question proceeding from this lesson is obvious. Are you living a life in pursuit of faith like Abraham, or a life of compromise, like Lot? The answer for all of us is yes and yes. We are living a life of faith and compromise. So the next question is, how can I be more like Abraham and less like Lot. And the answer is simple, trust and surrender your life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us pray...