

Scripture Reading: 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. 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." 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. 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. 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." 6 So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, 7 and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! 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." 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. 10 But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. 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.”

"The Wickedness of Sodom"

This morning we begin our study of Genesis chapter nineteen which details the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah AND we will again highlight & mourn another anniversary of the dreaded Roe v. Wade decision by our US Supreme Court on January 22, 1973.

Now Lord willing we are going to spend four weeks on this chapter so please don't expect ALL the answers to all the questions you might have to be answered this morning! In fact my plan for this first week is to step away from my usual exegetical approach to the text and give a sermon that might have been more common in the early church than most reformed churches today...

I am going to consider what we have read as an instructive allegory for our times! The Bible gives us examples of allegories that we must use and seeing others is certainly not a violation of the Scriptures as long as they keep Jesus & His work at the center of our teaching! The Apostle Paul uses this long portion of Genesis we have been studying as an allegory of bondage and freedom using Isaac and Ishmael as his examples. So I want take a broad look at our text and see how it gives us some insights that can be helpful for today;... Our two angels make their way to Sodom at evening time when Lot is sitting at the gate of the City much the same way Abraham was in chapter 18:

As we go through this chapter there are going to be times where we will wonder HOW the Apostle Peter could refer to 'righteous' Lot, but he does, and here we see just a bit of his faithfulness... He was paying attention and practicing hospitality! In the second verse Lot gets a bit of a shock when they announce they will spend the night in the streets...

- Remember they have come to evaluate the wickedness found there in Sodom.

However, with his insistence, they agree to go with Lot and even there in his home they will still discover the state of this wicked city:

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.”

- Abraham had learned that God would spare Sodom for the sake of ten righteous people and this verse makes it pretty clear they were NOT to be found.

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."

The city wanted to do very bad things to these men and thus this sin has been known as sodomy ever since and the judgment they brought on their city has been used as an example of God's judgment of sin down through history. Next we see Lot being righteous by wanting to protect these men followed by one of his most shocking actions...

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

- This is perhaps the most astounding effort every made to accommodate the world in the power of the flesh and it will fit nicely in my allegory as will the reaction of those from the city:

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."

These men have NO interest in repenting or doing the right thing so they plan to attack the one who points out their grievous sins...

- In modern terms they simple say, "who are you to judge us!"

The Angels then step in to protect Lot which we will consider in more detail next week! So we have a righteous, though greatly flawed man living in a wicked city:

- How can this be an allegory for us today here in America?

Well I would like to suggest that we see Lot as the average Christian here in America representing Christians at large...

- And his home as the church building and Christian institutions that they use and support.

The City of Sodom is the world or the 'culture' as some would say and the people of Sodom are our modern secular humanists of today.

Now we know that the Apostle Peter tells us that Lot was troubled by the wickedness in the city as most Christians today are here in America.

- BUT when these angels show up what is Lot's response?

You don't want to be in those streets, come to my home where it is safe!

- As we shall see with Lot's family members in the coming weeks, he had spent far too much time under the influence of this city.

And as is always the case, when we ignore the culture the home is only safe for so long: Late that night the men of the city come looking to abuse those in the home, just like we are seeing in the Church today with the example of the Atlanta Fire Chief who was fired for publishing a Sunday School booklet that did not meet the standards of the tolerance police!

And sadly when the world demands more and more we often try to accommodate them as Lot did...

- How about my daughters? ...

Of course we are all shocked by what Lot did and think we would NEVER do such a thing to ‘get along’ with the world...

- Well, I will leave it to all of you to discuss whether the fact that 90% of our Christian children are sent to government schools should be considered as a part of my allegory!

What certainly CAN be seen as part of this allegory is the fact that the Allen Guttmacher Institute, *[the statistics arm of Planned Parenthood]* reported that

- “One in five abortion patients identified themselves as born-again, evangelical, charismatic or fundamentalist...” *[repeat]*

Well I think you see the point of this allegory:

- We cannot simply hide in our sanctuaries as the world ‘goes to hell in a hand-basket.’

That is NOT what God has called us to do and why we are commissioned at the end of each and every worship service to go forth as the salt and light that our world needs.

- But sadly today the church at large is much more like Lot than the people Jesus commands us to be!

In December of 2013 a very prominent Pastor said some things on his popular radio program which were perhaps a bit more honest than usual but certainly not atypical of the thinking in far too many of our Churches today: “I really could not care less about the culture war!” he said in answer to a question about being involved.

His problem is that he sees this ‘culture war’ as “two temporal opposing moral philosophies.” Now IF this culture war was merely between the Republicans and Democrats or liberals and conservatives or atheists and deists or between Plato and Aristotle or their disciples then I could not agree more with what this pastor said! But that is not the nature of the real culture war today:

- There is a battle between God’s Law & man’s law, between acknowledging God as the Creator and seeing man as the center of all things.
- There is a battle between people who bow the knee to the King of Kings and those who insist we ALL get to do our own thing and determine what is right for us!

This pastor went on to say that it did not make a difference if you go to hell as a policeman or as a prostitute, which is true enough:

But the important point that he misses is that the choices one makes in this life DO make a difference, both now and for eternity.

- If that were not true you would have to ignore all of the Old Testament and most of the New, which sadly is the case in some churches today.

This pastor goes on to use one more example that reveals his world view and why he struggles with battling sins like abortion in the here and now:

He sees such battles as ‘rearranging the chairs on the Titanic’ and boldly states that ‘this thing is going down!’

- This is exactly the type of thinking that kept faithful church members in Germany in the 1930’s and 40’s in the pews singing louder and louder rather than on the streets opposing the growing tyranny of Adolf Hitler.

Contrast such thinking with what I shared from Pastor R.C. Sproul Jr. this last week...

R.C.: “Abortion is not an issue, but an evil. Fighting it is not a movement, but a calling on all who bear God’s image.”

God could hardly have made His point more clearly than He did in the 24th Chapter of Proverbs that was on our church calendar readings this week:

“If you faint in the day of adversity, Your strength is small. Deliver those who are drawn toward death, And hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, "Surely we did not know this," Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?”

Pastor Sproul continued:

“The anniversary is just a date on the calendar. But the babies are real, and they are really dead. The anniversary is just a date on the calendar. The babies are dead. Not fifty-million of them, but one of them, fifty million times.” [*reference the Stalin quote or Paris v. Nigeria.*]

And RC continued by saying, **“Friends, in the coming days... I will be talking every day about this issue. But when Monday comes, it is going to hurt me to turn my attention to something else, because Monday more babies will be killed. This horror will not end until we recognize that it is a horror, that we are called to end it, and until we repent for our own guilt, and for our forgetting, and for our moving on.**

This, friends, is the issue of our day. It is the issue of our day, and everything else is a distraction.”

While I wholeheartedly agree that this is the issue of our day, I would gently take issue with his comment that everything else is a distraction...

While we do not want to be in the antinomian ditch that says we do not care about the culture, there is a ditch on the other side of the road where we can become obsessed with something that in and of itself is a good thing. Here at Church of the King we take this battle seriously, even including a statement that we will publically oppose the grievous sins of abortion, homosexuality and adultery in our membership covenant! We encourage our members to be active as we will again today and we contribute as a church to various ProLife ministries to help them in this battle.

- **Raising children in the fear and admonition of the Lord is not something that would be considered a distraction!**
- **But making sure they are solidly ProLife should be an important part of their instruction and life!**

If one is called to be a minister, it would be wrong to ONLY preach against abortion and nothing else! But you would never shy away from confronting this evil when you can and encourage your flock to do the same.

If one was called into public office and won an election, there would be other duties to perform, but ending the scourge of abortion would need to be a top priority. [*use example of the new congress*]

We must be passionate when it comes to stopping the sin of abortion but we must also be content with where God has placed us: God has given the sword to the civil magistrate who today in our nation is greatly abusing that trust, but that does not give us the authority to close abortion clinics by force nor to execute abortionists.

- **We have seen those extremes in the past and so we must avoid this ditch as well as the opposite ditch of inaction & pietism.**

So what does this middle road of proper Biblical action look like for us?

- **Quite simply it comes down to Biblical prayers and actions...**

Our prayers must be lifted up often and must include, as we are doing today some of the imprecatory Psalms: Those that call down God’s judgment on the wicked as He did here at Sodom.

Many today are not comfortable with such prayers and I often use an example from the Book of Acts to illustrate why such prayers are still important today: In our Great Prayer this morning we will use Psalm 10 where we are calling on God to strike down the wicked!

The early Church had two wicked enemies against whom they would likely have prayed such a prayer:

- King Herod, who killed James and Saul of Tarsus who persecuted many in the early Church.
- I would argue that not only would they have faithfully lifted up such prayers as we will this morning but that God answered those prayers!
- King Herod was struck dead in his pride and rebellion, eaten by worms from within!
- Saul was struck dead on the road to Damascus and resurrected as Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles!

We should be bold in our prayers as well! We should also be specific in our prayers asking where God would have us take action!

- And so, what should proper action look like?

First and foremost we must be informed and we must be teaching the next generation!

IF you are not convinced that abortion is an evil to be opposed then do some study and talk with others who are convinced! *[share my story]*

We must not be afraid to inform our children about the reality of abortion *[talk about the book title "Who Broke the Baby"]*

- How this is handled in each family is up to that family, but again don't be afraid to ask for help.

Once we are informed and convinced then it is time to pray about where God would have us be involved.

- If you are a young mom raising five or six small children you are NOT going to have much time for outside activities!

But you can pray, write letters, share information AND take seriously your task of raising up the next generation of warriors!

When you reach the age of 95 as Al did last week, you will not be doing many marches or protests...

- But again I have often found those who have matured in years are also those who have matured in their prayer life and can be mighty warriors on that front in this battle.

Some of you are VERY busy with careers and small businesses that demand a great deal of your time and again your physical involvement might be limited...

- BUT it will likely put you in a good position to support those on the front lines with your money!
- Those of you who are here this morning thinking, I guess I do have some time on my hands, or could certainly make some will want to pay special attention to what Bud and John will share during our fellowship lunch today!

As a church we support a crisis pregnancy center to give women who are considering abortion a better option! They need volunteers and donations!

We support organizations that take the battle to the front lines by praying in front of abortion mills as babies are killed giving those moms one last chance to turn from their sin.

There are abortions done in Roseville and Sacramento each and every week so there are always opportunities to help on that front, even if all you do is stand and pray for those sharing with the women or confronting the workers.

We support groups that take the ProLife message onto college campuses in a powerful way as you will hear about from Bud and John...

- **And again they could use the help!**

And perhaps that is one of the best places to show why that Pastor who thought the culture war was not important is so wrong: Most like him would at some point say that they are focused on the important Kingdom work of sharing the Gospel and do not want anything to distract from that:

- **To them abortion is a political issue that gets in the way of the real work of the Kingdom.**

Well I would challenge any such pastor or anyone else with such concerns to just spend one day out there on those campuses seeing just how often the Gospel is shared as they confront the world where the rubber meets the road.

- **We spent years in the Book of Acts learning how Paul and others confronted the culture of their days and we must do the same!**

The alternative is to be like the Christians in our allegory from the life of Lot that try to keep everything 'safe' in the Church... It is not what God wants and it is not what pleases Him: In fact, it is just what the Nation of Israel would later be judged for as the Prophet Isaiah pointed out in the very first chapter of his very long book: We should take these words from God very seriously:

1: "9 Unless Jehovah of hosts Had left to us a very small remnant, We would have become like Sodom, We would have been made like Gomorrah. 10 Hear the word of Jehovah, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the law of our God, You people of Gomorrah: *[remember God is speaking to Israel here!]*

11 "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says Jehovah. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. *[as this goes on just plug in whatever worship style today that comes to mind because it is their religion God is talking about!]* 12 "When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts? 13 Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies-- I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. 14 Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. 15 When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you;

- **Why is God so upset by the very things He had commanded should be done in the Temple???**

"Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood."

- **This was NOT the blood from Temple sacrifices but the blood of their children sacrificed on the hands of Moloch for the sake of personal peace and affluence!**

16 "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, 17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow."

These are the same sins that brought judgment upon Sodom and the reason Israel would be taken into exile...

- **But there was hope for Israel just as there is hope for our nation and that hope is the Gospel:**

18 "Come now, and let us reason together," Says Jehovah, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. 19 If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; 20 But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of Jehovah has spoken." As the Lord always has, He sets before us life or death...

- **Let us be those who choose life**