

A Lot To Think About Genesis 18:1-19:38

A very sober warning is given to the believer in the first epistle of John.

I John 2:15-17 “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”

Phillips version – “Never give your hearts to this world or to any of the things in it. A man cannot love the Father and love the world at the same time. For the whole world-system, based as it is on men's primitive desires, their greedy ambitions and the glamour of all that they think splendid, is not derived from the Father at all, but from the world itself.”

The Message – “Don't love the world's ways. Don't love the world's goods. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. Practically everything that goes on in the world—wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from Him.”

Some believe that John is speaking here about not loving the created world. Others think he's referring to people in the world. Both are wrong. How is it that we should hate a created world that has been made for the purpose of declaring His glory or that hate people for whom God loves and sent His Son to die for. Some, like the Amish, have taken this verse to the extreme and contend that the believer should have nothing to do with anything material, adopting and adhering to a simple lifestyle, plain dress and a reluctance to use any modern technology or material conveniences.

Others take this passage to mean that we should avoid as best we can any association with people who are not believers, live in spiritual isolation.

But John doesn't mean it to be taken to that extreme. To John, the world he was referring to is an entity hostile to God with a very seductive influence on the believer that lures him or her away from loving God first and foremost. This is a warning against following a system that may seem innocent but can, over time, dull our love for God and lure us to compromise a little here and a little there until we appear to be no different than the people around us who are unbelievers.

John continues by noting that to love the world forfeits the love of the Father because their love for the world is greater than their love for Him. Oh, sure they still may go to church, when they want, they still carry their Bible, they still pray at meals, but it is a superficial compulsory exercise out of habit not conviction.

James is starkly candid when he writes that friendship with the world is hatred toward God.

In **Romans 12:2** Paul's advice was to not let the world squeeze you into its mold.

Paul also recognized the enticing pull of the world system in writing to Timothy when he encouraged his young protégé to quickly come to him because Demas had left him **“because he loved this present world.” (II Timothy 4:10)** Only God knows how many names could replace Demas. At one time my name could be inserted there.

The pull of the world makes life seem so comfortable. Maybe you have loved ones who love this present world more than they love the Father.

The point to this is that we have examples in Scripture of those who chose to be influenced by the values, or maybe I should say the vices, of this world system instead of continually resisting its allurements, a system that is opposed to our Christian values and Biblical principles by which we are to live. We aren't enticed by a system that openly mocks and attacks our values. To lure the Christian the enemy entices with things that don't seem so bad. They holler to those on shore “come on in the water's fine” when it's a teeming cesspool

of filth and depravation.

In their Bible Commentary, Walvoord and Zuck write “The world competes for the love of Christians and one cannot both love it and the Father at the same time....The world thus conceived is a system of values and goals from which God is excluded.”

Try as we may, Jesus is right when He said that we cannot love and serve two masters. It's incompatible with the love of the Father. Its value system is based on cravings, lust, and desires and in the New Testament this word is usually, but not always, associated with something that is sinful.

The lust of the flesh refers to desires that are illicit bodily appetites, what the flesh craves whether sex or drugs or abuse of alcohol or even overindulgence of eating.

The lust of the eyes refers to man's covetous nature. It's a craving for things, wanting what you can't have or what belongs to others. That promotion, another car, your neighbor's lawn or spouse.

The pride of life refers to boasting in such a way that exalts self at the expense of being demeaning or condescending to others. It could be bragging about an actual accomplishment or even just embellishing that accomplishment. Haman bragged about his favor with the king and queen. Nebuchadnezzar bragged about the kingdom he built. The farmer bragged about his bountiful harvest.

It is an easy step to be lured into the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. If you don't think so, go back and read **Genesis 3** and take a look at Eve or consider the example of Lot who is the subject of **chapter 19**.

The opening chapter and verse of the book of Psalms is a stark warning if you would be truly happy: **“Blessed or happy is the man who walks not after the counsel of the ungodly or stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scorners or mockers.” (Psalm 1:1)**

The Good News Translation puts it this way: **“Happy are those who reject the advice of evil people, who do not follow the example of sinners or join those who have no use for God.”**

Now that brings us to our text in **Genesis 18-19**. This passage shows us what can happen to the person who chooses to love the world instead of God. This passage gives us a Lot to think about both literally in the person of the text but also in the events and results surrounding his poor choices. It is about a man who has come to love the world more than God. As a matter of fact, if all we had was the account of Lot's life recorded in Genesis, we would conclude that he had no relationship with God. But thanks to the Holy Spirit inspired writings of Peter, we read in his second epistle that Lot was a righteous man **“distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men”** and continues by saying that he was tormented daily **“in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard.” (II Peter 2:7-8)**

Yet what we read in these chapters doesn't seem to fit with what we read in II Peter. Peter speaks of his position before God and Genesis reveals his practice. **How did he get to this point in his life and how can we avoid such compromise of conviction?** **Chapter 18** is the backdrop for what takes place in **chapter 19**.

Notice first a two-fold visit by strangers.

I. A TWO-FOLD VISIT BY STRANGERS – 18:1-33

Now in **vs. 1-15** we see Sarah's waiting is ending.

A. Sarah's Waiting Is Ending – vs. 1-15

Our text doesn't give us a timing for this event but we can assume it must have taken place shortly after the events of **chapter 17** since we read in this chapter that Sarah would have a son within the year. We know that Abraham was 99 in **chapter 17** and that Isaac is born when he is 100.

It is early afternoon because we read that Abraham is sitting under the shade of a great tree in the heat of the day. It's hot and workers come in from the field and get some rest from the heat. In **verses 1-8** we see a welcome act by Abraham.

1. A welcome act by Abraham – vs. 1-8

Abraham is resting from the heat. From what we read in **v. 16** the great tree must have been sitting on top of a hill because it says that Abraham looked down toward Sodom. We read the same in **19:28**. From his vantage point he would have seen three men approaching. But our text says they appeared and that's exactly what I think happened. One second they weren't there and the next they were. They just appeared walking toward him in the heat of the day. Immediately he jumped up and offered the customary greeting of bowing and offering them hospitality. From where they came from they needed neither food nor refreshment, but they accepted his offer. Visiting Abraham that day was God and two of His angels. Abraham will realize that in time. Remember that Hebrews tells us that we may entertain angels without our knowing it.

[Once in a while an old post will resurface on Facebook asking the question if you could have dinner with anyone, who would it be and why.](#) Here is Abraham entertaining the Creator-God. Some homes have a plaque hanging on the wall. Appropriately it says that God is the head of this house, the unseen guest at every meal, and the silent listener to every meal. How different would homes be if it were truly realized and understood? Abraham was now going to entertain in person that unseen guest.

Abraham was growing in faith and making God a part of his daily life and decisions. He ran to tell Sarah about the guests and does what many wives might find as grounds for marital war. Make some bread and fix a big feast – without any warning. She hadn't dusted or vacuumed. A pile of unfolded clothes lay on the couch. Dishes were still in the sink. How would you feel with such a request?

Now those of you who bake bread or butcher your meat to broil or stew know that it takes time. She couldn't just pull something from the freezer and pop it in the microwave. This was an all-afternoon ordeal and in the heat of the day no less. But she did as her husband asked. And then we read something that is often overlooked. Abraham was the one who served the guests, and then he stood by

as they ate. He had dozens of servants who could have done that while he joined in the feasting, but instead shows us a servant's heart. It was a welcome act.

In **verses 9-15**, though, there is a worrisome attitude by Sarah.

2. A worrisome attitude by Sarah – vs. 9-15

It is in this passage that we see the first purpose of the strangers. The main guest, who in the text is identified as the LORD, asked where Sarah was. Notice that this stranger knew her name. That should have been another clue to the uniqueness of these guests.

“She's in the tent.”

The LORD spoke and informed Abraham that she would have a son the following year.

[I like the matter of fact Emma who is the receptionist/housekeeper in White Christmas. There is a scene where she had listened in on a conversation in which she replies to getting caught and proudly states that she is president of the busybody's association.](#)

Sarah was listening in on the conversation behind the tent flap. When she heard the guest mention that she would have a son, she laughed to herself amused that two people well beyond the age of having children would have the pleasure of a bouncing boy. As I mentioned last week, this laugh is different from Abraham's laugh in that his was a laugh of joy while this is a laugh of doubt. What was said next tipped the hand of who this guest really was. Sarah hadn't said a word but spoke in her heart, yet the guest knew everything in her heart. Only God can do that. **Psalms 139:4** says He knows what we are going to speak even before it rolls off the tongue. He knew her thoughts, exposed it which she denied, but the Lord knew.

Think about this. Hagar learned that God sees her. Sarah learned that God sees insider her.

I John 4:20 “God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything.”

[A.W. Tozer writes “God knows instantly and](#)

effortlessly all matter and all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits, all being and every being, all creaturehood and all creatures, every plurality and pluralities, all law and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feelings, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven, and hell.”

He knows everything there is to know about everything. He knows when we sit or stand, lie down or rise up and where we go. He knows what we say and what we think. It was no big deal for Him to know the heart and mind of Sarah or to know the motives of her heart cast in doubt.

The icing on the cake of His identity is found here, something we should underline in our Bibles and remember every day **“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”** Sarah had not as yet come to the place of believing in the promises of God as Abraham had and received a rebuke from the Lord for her doubt, but her heart was being prepared to do what was not hard for Him. That term literally means too surpassing or too incredible. She would learn that if God knew everything, He could do anything.

Let me again remind you of the passage I gave you last week, that sums up our confidence in the ability of an all-powerful God to do what we think is impossible. Sometimes I will close an email with this verse: **Ephesians 3:20 “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us.”**

Verse 21 gives the reason of His unimaginable work in us. It is for His glory.

Don’t limit Him by doubt or inability to see what He can do. It’s beyond our comprehension.

God would supply all her needs according to His riches in glory.

At times the way of the Lord is not clear and we have to put all our weight of trust on the Lord.

They were 99 and 89 respectively. God had promised an heir, something impossible they had to believe God could and would do.

It’s no different for us.

Sarah’s waiting is ending.

But the Lord then divulges the other reason for their visit that afternoon.

In **verses 16-33** we read that Sodom’s wasting is explained.

B. Sodom’s Wasting Is Explained – vs. 16-33

Before we hear about what will happen to Sodom, there is a promise that is repeated to Abraham.

1. A promise that is repeated – vs. 16-19

As I said last week, remember the promises God has given by reading His Word. The Lord who made the promise is faithful to do what He said.

The group of four men stood by the great tree looking down toward Sodom. The Lord wondered out loud with the other two travelers whether they should inform Abraham of their intentions. We have to wonder if the gaze toward Sodom and the tone of the question clued Abraham into what might happen. But before the Lord talks about Sodom He reminded Abraham that he had been chosen to become a great nation and that he was to instruct his descendants to always follow the Lord. It may have been the Lord’s way of saying that if they didn’t do what was right and just they would end up like Sodom.

Verses 20-21 tell us about a protest that is heard.

2. A protest that is heard – vs. 20-21

“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.’”

The outcry heard in these two cities was the reason for God’s judgment on them. We read that their sins were great and grievous. Let me say that it wasn’t just because of their lifestyle choices of sodomy.

That was only a symptom of a greater heart issue. The word **“outcry”** is used in Scripture of the oppressed and brutalized. It is used in **Genesis 4:10** where the blood of Abel cried out from the ground against Cain who murdered him.

It is used in **Exodus 22:22-23** of the outcry by widows and orphans.

In **Deuteronomy 24:15** it is the cry of the oppressed servant.

In **Exodus 2:23** it is the cry of oppressed Israel in Egypt because of their task masters.

In **Jeremiah 18:22 and 20:16** it is the cries of an oppressed individual and an oppressed city.

Ezekiel gives us a clue as to why they cried out.

Ezekiel 16:49

About this outcry Nahum Sarna wrote **“They connote the anguished cry of the oppressed, the agonized plea of the victim in the face of some injustice...The sin of Sodom, then, is heinous moral and social corruption an arrogant disregard for basic human rights, a cynical insensitivity to the sufferings of others.”**

This outcry came to the ear of God who came down to get an accurate assessment before a full and final judgment. This does not diminish in any way His omniscience, but rather means that He will not act out of ignorance or merely based on complaints.

The outcry that God heard was in regard to social injustice and part of that unjust oppression may also have been their sexual perversion as the reason for their judgment. A protest by the oppressed had reached the ears of God.

Abraham now understood the intentions of the Lord to destroy Sodom for its great and grievous sins. They are beyond hope and help. This society had become just like the days of Noah described in **6:5** **“The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.”** That accurately describes the cities of the plains God is about to destroy.

In **verses 22-32** we see a petition that is made.

3. A petition that is made – vs. 22-32

Where there is an unwillingness to repent of sin, God has already made up His mind. It is only a matter of time before His judgment will fall. The hearts and minds of the people in Sodom and Gomorrah were already so hardened that God stepped in to mete out a justified sentence of guilty bringing the death penalty. **“The wages of sin is death”** for those who will not repent. **Romans 1:18** could just as easily been stamped on the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah where we read **“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”** There was no willingness to repent and Abraham stepped in to intervene for the the city basing his plea on the mercy of God confident that God would do right because of His justice.

Deuteronomy 32:4

“Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?”

Would you do it if there were 50 righteous?

Would you do it if there were 45 righteous?

Would you do it if there were 40 righteous?

Would you do it if there were 30 righteous?

Would you do it if there were 20 righteous?

Would you do it if there were 10 righteous?

Would you destroy the righteous in the same way as the wicked? Would you treat them alike?

This is the second time that Abraham has intervened for Sodom. The first occasion was when he stormed after the armies that had captured the city and took Lot and its citizens captive. Abraham’s plea is based on his confidence that the Judge of all the earth would do what was right. It’s a phrase we sometimes here at funerals. Everyone will stand before the throne of God to be judged by Him.

Now, just for a moment I want you to consider the difference between Jonah and Abraham. They both were called to intercede for pagan people. Abraham interceded for a pagan culture based on the mercy of God. Abraham knew God was just and had every right to judge them for their wickedness, but he interceded for them based on God’s mercy.

Jonah on the other hand was unwilling to intercede.

He was unwilling to consider the mercy of God. He only wanted God's justice. They deserved judgment not mercy. He even admitted that He knew God to be merciful and forgiving, yet because they were the enemy he would rather see them annihilated for their wickedness than spared because of repentance. Abraham showed compassion while Jonah showed contempt. Abraham was concerned, Jonah was calloused. Jonah was gleeful at the thought of their destruction and was sorely disappointed when it didn't happen. There he was sitting up on a hill with a bowl of popcorn and a lemonade waiting for the fire and brimstone to destroy Nineveh.

Out of concern for his nephew, Abraham petitioned the Lord for mercy to the righteous. He knew the Lord was fully justified in judging the cities of the plains due to their blatant wickedness, but still he boldly petitioned the Lord for the sake of Lot. One author writes that this petition for Sodom and Gomorrah is in line with his calling to be a vehicle of blessing to the whole world.

Abraham made a bold petition to the one who is both able to justly Judge and deliver mercy. In the last verse of **chapter 18** we notice a punishment that is final.

4. A punishment that is final – v. 33

Essentially God is telling Abraham that if there were 10 righteous people in the city He would not destroy the city but the sad reality is that there weren't. With that, the Lord left and Abraham returned to his tent, an indication that judgment would proceed and that the Judge of all the earth would do what was right.

As we come to **chapter 19** I want to do something that happens once in a blue moon. You may be looking at the chapter and your watch, noticing that it is around noon and he has 38 verses to go. What you don't know is that I have three more points to my message. So here's what I want to do. We are going to pause right there and come back to this chapter next week. I want to pick it up here and talk about a terrible vengeance on Sodom, a troublesome venture by sisters and conclude with what I hope is

the meat to chew on and that is a three-fold virtue for sinners. We still have a Lot to think about and we need to see where he ended up and how we can avoid the choices he made. So, will you come back next week to get part 2? Now if you come to Sunday school, and by the way I want to encourage you to come out each week because you get the opportunity to pick the bones of the text, for Sunday school next week read **chapter 19** and compare it to **chapter 13:10-13, Romans 12:1-2; I Peter 1:13-16; I John 2:15-17**. Those passages are your discussion points for the message next week.

Let me also encourage you to come out Wednesday night to prayer meeting. We have been discussing the issue of sin and specifically the past couple weeks the topic of backsliding. That's where we find Lot in this chapter. We will see that His estranged relationship with the Lord results in his making poor choices. His example helps us make godly choices that honor the Lord and not bring Him shame. So, will you ponder those passages and come back next week for the conclusion?

Now, let me close with two things this from **chapter 18**. The first is a thought we have been coming back to repeatedly for several weeks – have faith because nothing is too hard for God. If you are facing a seemingly insurmountable wall remember that nothing is too hard for God.

The second thing is this: The Judge of all the earth will do right. His justice will not allow Him to turn away from sin. For all those who believe that God is only a loving God and won't judge anyone have another thing coming. His love and mercy are balanced with His judgment.

If you are hear today banking on a delay to God's judgment so that you can wait for the last possible moment to ask for His mercy in saving you, don't push your luck. Turn in repentance to Christ and ask to receive His gift of salvation.

I've given you a Lot to think about and we have a Lot more next week.