

99-03-07b

We're ready now to resume our study in Genesis chapter 19. We left off with the rather unflattering picture of Lot, with the grace of God literally standing before him, grabbing him by the hand and pulling him from destruction, saying, please no, my lords. In verse 18 of Genesis 19.

And now Lot is going to argue or bargain essentially with God. You've probably already noticed that there are many parallels in Genesis 18 and Genesis 19. The visit that God has with Abraham, the visit that these messengers have with Lot.

And as we see the similarities, we also note the contrasts. In each case you have a bargaining or an attempt to persuade God to change his mind. God tells Abraham that he's going to destroy Sodom.

And then he stands before Abraham, sort of provoking Abraham to a response. Abraham has been silent. He's walked with God all the way up to the hill overlooking Sodom.

God tells him on the way, I'm not going to hide from Abraham what I'm about to do. Talks about the destruction and so forth. The two messengers head on down towards Sodom.

And apparently Abraham didn't really have a lot to say. But God is still standing before Abraham. Abraham realizes that there's more to this than just a casual visit.

He then has his chance to intercede. And he goes through that long conversation. Well, if there are 50 righteous, if there are 45 righteous, would you spare the city? Genesis, as we have seen, is a book of firsts.

It's the first book of the Bible. And many of the themes and the threads that will run throughout the 66 books of the Bible have their origin, rather predictably, in Genesis. One of the first places that we find the idea of substitution or on God rescuing or delivering one for the sake of another is here in Genesis.

We saw it first, I think, most clearly with Noah. In that righteous Noah, God remembering Noah, his seven associated family members are delivered. There's no mention made of them being particularly noteworthy or in any other way having gained God's attention except by their association with Noah.

Here, Abraham establishes and talks to God. And this is apparently something Abraham already knows. He says, Far be it from you, Lord.

Abraham knows that it's not a part of God's nature to be unjust, to sweep away the righteous with the guilty. There's no argument that the people in Sodom are guilty. Abraham knows what kind of people they are.

He knows what kind of region it is. But he says, Far be it from you, Lord. Far be it from you.

He repeats it. To sweep away the righteous with the guilty. And he says, If there were 50 righteous in Sodom, would you spare the city? And right there you have the statement of a principle that is kind of startling if you think about it.

God will spare the entire unrighteous city of Sodom. These hundreds, perhaps thousands of wicked individuals. He doesn't say, If there are 50 in the city, I will deliver them.

I will rescue them out. He says, I won't destroy the city for their sake. I will spare the guilty.

I will not execute judgment on them for the sake of the righteous. Righteousness is a powerful thing. Righteousness comes from God.

We saw in Titus 3 this morning, it's not by works of righteousness that we have done. It's God's mercy when he assigns us righteousness through faith. We've seen in our study of Romans, chapter 5, that we are justified by faith.

We are declared righteous by faith. Declared righteous. It's the righteousness of God that is credited to our account.

Genesis 17, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. That righteousness is a powerful thing. It's a precious possession that we have because of the work of Jesus Christ.

The work of another. It is because of Jesus Christ and his righteousness that we are delivered. It is because of Noah and his righteousness that Noah's family and the animals are delivered because God remembered Noah.

It is because of Abraham and his righteousness that Lot and his family are going to be delivered. Now what kind of person is Lot? We've already seen that he is weak, that he is extraordinarily dumb. I don't know of any other good word to use for it.

He's just dumb when it comes to direct divine revelation of impending disaster and he doesn't want to heed it. There's one thing you can say in Lot's defense and there's a beautiful picture in the story of Lot of our own salvation and of our own standing before God. If you remember, and we're going to go back just briefly here in Genesis 19, when the two messengers came to Sodom in the evening and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom, when Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.

He said, My lords, please turn in to your servants' house and spend the night and wash your feet. He welcomed them. He recognized in them, I think the same way Abraham

did, that they were unusual, that there was something extraordinary about them.

And then in verse 4, Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, old and young, all the people from every quarter surrounded the house. They called to Lot and said, Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out, that we may know them carnally. Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind and said, Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly.

And he will not give them up. He has received them into his house and it wasn't a casual thing. He is willing to put his life on the line.

He is willing, unfortunately, to put the lives of his daughters on the line to protect these men. We talked last week about the despicable nature of Lot's willingness to sacrifice his daughters. We saw parallels to it over in Judges.

And elsewhere in the Prophets. But there is one thing you have to say about Lot. There is one thing that Lot does right.

He receives the divine messengers. Jesus will tell the disciples in the New Testament, Those who receive you are receiving me. And the ones who receive me are receiving my Father.

Lot does one thing right. He doesn't turn away the divine messengers. He doesn't give them up when there is an apparent danger of their being seized by the crowd.

This is a wonderful picture of what happens at our salvation. We have no merit. We have no righteousness.

There is nothing commendable about us. We are hopeless, helpless, useless. We are without God in the world.

Without hope. And the one thing that we are able to do is receive. It reminds me of the demon possessed man with the legion on the far side of the Sea of Galilee.

And Jesus and the disciples come across. Nobody has been able to bind this man. Nobody has been able to control him.

He attacks passers-by. He is full of demons. He is ragged.

He is unkempt. He is dangerous. But when Jesus steps out of the boat, the one thing he can do is run toward the Lord and fall down on his face.

And that is all it takes for his deliverance. He recognizes Jesus and he moves in that direction. He receives him.

He throws himself down in front of him. Lot does the same thing with the divine

messengers. Nothing else.

I can't find another commendable thing about Lot in this entire chapter. The one thing that he does is he receives the messengers. He extends hospitality to them.

He receives them and he won't give them up. No matter what. They are in the process of seizing him and tearing him apart outside the door when the angels reach out and pull him back inside.

Nothing else about Lot is commendable. Why is Lot spared? It is not because he is righteous. He is not a model of righteousness.

He is weak, vacillating, indecisive. He is fearful. He repudiates and negates the divine message of deliverance.

The only thing he does is he receives these messengers. We saw earlier on and we had some questions. Well, the three-fold messenger party here tends to remind us in the same way like the hymn we sang this morning.

Holy, Holy, Holy. The song of the cherubim around the throne of God. The three holies suggest to us the three members of the Trinity.

These three messengers who come suggest to us the three members of the Trinity. It doesn't necessarily mean that these other two are Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. But in the realm of symbolism, who is it that Lot has welcomed into his home? If you think about the central figure, God the Father, who I think is in fact God the Father when he speaks with Abraham, doesn't come to Lot.

But these other two representatives do and Lot takes them in and he won't give them up. That's the one thing he does right. But the reason he's delivered is because of Abraham.

Abraham has established that principle in his conversation with God. For the sake of the righteous, will you spare? And this is a big deal. This is a big principle.

This is the basis of our salvation. It's like in the realm of law where you have legal precedent when a court case is adjudicated and a verdict is rendered and judgments are awarded or whatever depending on if it's civil or criminal trial. Everything in law goes back to precedent.

Is there a precedent for this? Is there a principle that has been established and relied upon in the past? Well, this is the establishing of the precedent. This conversation, the long drawn out conversation that Abraham has with God. God says, I can, without compromising righteousness and justice, I can withhold judgment because of the righteous.

This city that I plan to destroy, if there are 50 righteous people in there, I will not destroy the city. I will spare it for the sake of the righteous. And this sets up the idea and communicates to us the principle of benefit to a different person than the one who is declared righteous.

We call it blessing by association. But there is also here the grains and the seeds of the idea of substitutionary atonement. That God can bless, God can preserve, God can deliver a person on the basis of a different person.

It doesn't have to be that person. Lot is going to be delivered because of Abraham. God remembers Abraham when he delivers Lot.

Lot is hopeless, helpless and useless. But Lot does one thing that his sons-in-law do not do, that his wife ultimately is not going to do, and that is accept these divine messengers. And in the feeblest, weakest, most vacillating and despicable way, he eventually heeds what they say.

He argues. It's the barest, it's the most skin-of-the-teeth thing. And he's a great picture of what happens at our salvation.

Titus 3.5 Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us. Accepting the word of truth, accepting the gospel of Jesus Christ at the point of our salvation doesn't merit us anything, but it is a requirement. He, in the barest, weakest way, accepts.

He lets himself be... He's dragged. He's dragged by the hands, but he lets himself be dragged out. The sons-in-law do not.

The wife, even though she's dragged out, just can't tear herself away and turns around and looks back and violates the word of those... the command of those messengers. And she's turned into a pile of minerals. But Lot accepts the messengers and he is delivered.

But he's delivered on the basis of Abraham's intercession, Abraham's righteousness. And there's a picture, there's a foreshadowing of our deliverance. We're like Lot.

It's a humbling thing. It's good for our humility to recognize that we're like Lot. We are rescued and delivered on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, on the basis of the intercession on our behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it is not our merit. It's not our righteousness. And there's two sides to that coin because on the one hand, we know that salvation, whether at the point of our deliverance from the lake of fire or any other time in life, is not based on what we do.

It's based on the merit and the intercessory ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. But it also reminds us that we don't have to keep thinking in terms of meriting God's blessings.

Sometimes we're almost ashamed to go before God when we have failed.

And we think, well, I'm not worthy. Well, of course we're not worthy. When did we ever get the idea that we were worthy? Did we think that yesterday and now today we don't think we're worthy? It shouldn't be a shock to us.

We think, oh, I'm no longer worthy. Well, when was I worthy? On what basis did I ever hold up my head before God? This is what we need to remember. If we start feeling bad about our failures, and I think all of us have done this, where sometimes you just think, oh, boy, I just can't go.

I think I'll wait a while before I confess this, and I just can't really bring myself before God. What was the basis of approach to God a few hours ago or a few days ago? When did we ever think that we were such, oh, we can just walk right in. It wasn't until my failure that I sort of rendered myself not able to approach.

This is what Paul is talking about to Titus when he says we need humility. When did we ever think we could stand on our two feet and walk before the throne of God on any basis other than the righteousness of Jesus Christ? There are no works of righteousness that we have done that qualify us, past, present, or future, to stand before God. It is the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

And this is the principle that is first being brought out here. So any time, if we need a little humility refreshing, think about Lot. You know, they had this lady on TV that tape recorded her friend and got the president in all kinds of trouble and so forth.

And one of the things that really jarred everyone is when she was interviewed on TV and she said, Who am I? I'm you. And everybody said, Oh, no, you're not. You're not me.

I would never betray a friend and tape record private conversations and so forth. And she seems, I think she's not gifted with a lot of charisma to begin with. But when she said, I'm you, everybody just got the idea, No, you're not.

How can you say that? You are as far from me. I mean, there are people that just got it sensed over this. Well, when you look at Lot, Lot is us.

We are Lot. This is how much we bring to the table. This is what we bring that makes us deliverable and worth saving is what Lot brings.

God remembered Abraham when he delivered Lot. God remembers the Lord Jesus Christ when he delivers us. Like we saw in the first lesson this morning in Titus chapter 3, that is our healthy perspective to begin with.

But you remember toward the end of that section that we read, he says, this ought to be a motivation for good works. We don't just give up and say, Oh, Christianity is not a

crutch, it's a stretcher. Just carry me into the kingdom.

I'm hopeless, helpless, and useless. And oh God, pull the strings. Just take me over.

Run me like a robot. I'm hopeless, helpless, and useless. There is a balance.

And we've talked about this before. Any principle in the word of God that you find and latch on to, you need to find the related principles that balance it and give it context and meaning. We don't seize on any one principle and say, Well, this is my life principle.

I'm going to live by this. Christianity is a stretcher. It's the righteousness of Christ.

I'm just going to lay here and let God drag me by the hand into the kingdom just like Lot. God doesn't want us to remain like Lot, does he? He wants us to grow, to mature. We've seen this in the progress of Abram's life when he goes from Abram to Abraham.

And this grace and compassion of God in delivering us ought to motivate us to take advantage of what God gives us so that we are thoroughly equipped and prepared for every good work. It's not our good works that qualify us. We don't come before God on that basis.

But God gives us the ability. He transforms us on the inside and we are to function as his creation and reflect his glory and put on the new man. So there's a balance.

Anytime we start getting full of ourselves, anytime we start thinking, well, I had a really good week. I'll just waltz into the throne room of God and bring a few requests in there. I don't feel like I have to hang my head in shame.

We can remember that we're like Lot. But we're not supposed to remain like Lot. We're supposed to make progress like Abraham.

Abraham is called the friend of God. God identifies himself. Can you imagine a greater honor than for God to come in and say, I am the God of Sam and Dan and Mike and Patty and Lori and Janelle or anyone.

Just fill in your name. I am the God of your name here. What an honor.

God says, I am the God of Abraham. Abraham has made some colossal failures. God is going to name his son after David.

David murders and commits adultery and does all these things. But there's a common pattern of progress. All of us.

Abraham wasn't any better than Lot when he started out. We are no better than Lot. But looking at the grace of God to us in saving us because of the righteousness of Christ and the intercession of Christ, this is our opportunity to make something, let God make

something out of us, to transform us and to turn us into something that reflects his glory and manifests his image.

This is the opportunity that's before us. And it overshadows and completely makes miniscule every other ambition in life. What could be a greater calling? What could be a greater pursuit than to put on Christ, to put on the new man, as we've been seeing in Colossians? Well, Lot, in the face of the grace of God.

This, by the way, is not Lot's first deliverance, is it? He was taken captive by the kings, the confederation that came down from the north. And Abraham, in a different picture of salvation, you see Abraham going up there with a small force, wiping out the kings, bringing back all of the people, including the people of Sodom, all of their stuff, all of their families, and Lot. Lot was delivered once before.

And this is Knuckles wrapping on Lot's cranium here. Hey, where is God's deliverance? Where is God's favor? Where is the meaning and the purpose in life? It's with what Abraham's doing. God was with Abraham.

God used Abraham as a means of deliverance. Lot separated himself from Abraham. When he gets delivered from the kings, this is his chance to associate himself with Abraham, to recognize this is where the substance and the meaning and the eternal weight of glory is.

It's life with God. Lot doesn't get that message. He wants to go live in Sodom.

And so now here is his skin-of-the-teeth deliverance. Well, Lot is standing there like the lady on TV saying, I'm you. This helps us maintain our proper perspective of humility before God.

And the basis on which we approach God is not our righteousness. It's the righteousness of Jesus Christ. But it's also a compelling motivation to wake up and exploit the grace and the compassion of God and let him transform us.

This is not a far-off ambition. It's not going to the mission field or becoming a great evangelist. This is self-control.

This is not speaking evil. This is submission in the structure that God has ordained in life. These are the things that are spoken of as the fruit of the Spirit, that are spoken of in the first part of chapter 3 of Titus and so many other places in the Bible.

It's our daily challenge to let God transform us, to change us from a Lot into an Abraham. And it's a process. We're going to see as we move forward.

Abraham hasn't arrived. Abraham didn't pass some magic mile marker and suddenly he's got one of those round things behind his head like you see in the medieval

paintings. He's going to go back and commit an old mistake in the next chapter.

When we get into chapter 20, he's going to do something he'd not have known better. He's long past this kind of thing. He's had this great victory.

God himself has come down and eaten a meal in the presence of Abraham, has talked with Abraham and walked with Abraham. And Abraham is going to do the cheesiest, crummiest thing in the next chapter. He's going to do a Lot type of thing.

So here's Lot. And we've read through the rest of this. You know that he waffles.

He is fearful. This would be a classic caricature of not the good guy in some movie. Everything he does is just not admirable.

He's just despicable. To save himself, he'll sacrifice his daughters. To save his guests, which, by the way, I could do a whole 60 minutes on partial justification, on rationalization.

Is it a good thing to protect the guests, to receive them and exercise hospitality toward them and protect them from the crowd? Yes. But are you going to do it by tossing your daughters to this ravaging crowd? A right thing done in a wrong way is wrong. And it's hard to admire Lot for protecting the messengers when he's not out there saying, take me.

He's saying, take my daughters. The blindness that he has toward his own attitudes, he has assimilated, he has absorbed the values of his contemporaries, the people, his brothers. Oh, my brothers, do not do so wickedly.

He's set himself up as a judge. He's going to render justice in Sodom. And he's willing to throw his daughters out here and let them be raped and killed to save his guests.

What kind of values? But he could say, well, but my guests, they're men, I'm a man, they're just women. The mindset of this, especially in our politically correct environment, people are just horrified by this kind of thing. And it is horrifying.

And it's supposed to be horrifying because that's us. Who's more blind in Sodom? The people feeling around for the door of Lot's house or Lot himself? He can't even see what a cheese ball he is, what a terrible, crummy value system. He's set himself up to be a judge, and he's condemned by these wicked Sodomites who are saying, you think you're a judge and you're not.

And he isn't. He's terrible. That's us.

That's where we start. That's what we bring to the table when God, in compassion and grace, saves us for the sake of Jesus Christ. We were saved so that Christ could be the firstborn among many brethren.

And we should be just as comfortable coming to God for forgiveness and cleansing right after a failure as we are when we're feeling pretty good and we think it was just kind of a minor infraction because we are just as useless as Lot. But there is the up-building of the grace of God. There's the up-building of the presence of the Holy Spirit, the presence of the Word of God.

These things belong to God, and these things can transform, the contents can transform the vessel that contains them. That's how great the power of God is, and that's what we constantly look at. We say, God can change me.

God can renew me. I can put on the new man. I can renew the image of God.

Lot doesn't do that, and this is his failure. He has the same opportunity as Abraham. He's talking to the same God, but you look at the difference.

It came to pass in verse 17, when they brought him outside, he said, this is the messenger talking to Lot, escape for your life. Do not look behind you. Do not stay anywhere in the plain.

Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed. Get away from what we're delivering you from. This is doom to destruction.

Get away from it. Lot doesn't want to get away from it. Lot's wife doesn't want to get away from it.

Lot's daughters don't want to get away from it. Lot said to them, please, no, my lords. Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and that's true.

It is the compassion and the grace of God that has brought him outside the city limits. You have increased your mercy, which you have shown me by saving my life, but I cannot escape to the mountains. What you have told me to do is impossible.

I can't do it. Well, this is a pretty bold thing to say to Almighty God, essentially. You've told me to do something that I can't do.

Lot has a big case of give-up-itis. I cannot escape to the mountains, for some evil will overtake me, and I will die. If I obey, evil will overtake me, and I will die.

This is total lack of faith that in the Word of God, God has sent His Word to Lot. Get into the mountains, get away from the plain. Oh no, if I do that, I'll die.

Evil will overtake me if I do what God says. I mean, when you parse it out and say what it's really saying, it's just ridiculous. But isn't that what we do? With the Word of God and the Spirit of God in our souls, we look at some areas of our life, we look at areas of failure, we look at things that have been a part of our life for a long time, and we say, it's impossible.

If I actually pursue this course, if I cut off the hand that offends me, if I really step over that line, and all of us reach it at some point in different areas of life where it's put up or shut up. You either really believe that God will provide, you really believe that God will transform, you really believe that God will vindicate and God will justify, you really believe that you can just let go of this thing and God will handle it. All of us come up to that and we either make that step, and it's a big one, and say, okay, this doesn't make any sense, it looks like disaster, it looks like it can't possibly work, but this is what God said, I'm going to do it.

Or we don't. Well, Lot came up to that point and just absolutely caved in. Oh no, how can I leave? I'll never make it.

I don't know if Lot was overweight and didn't think he could climb the mountain. I don't know if he was just so unbelieving that the plane was really going to be destroyed. Why would you say this to God? Oh, I can't make it.

Some evil is going to overtake me. Was it so unsafe to travel in the regions of Sodom that he thought, well, I know the road to the mountains and that's where all the bandits live. I mean, you guys have dragged me out of my house and brought me to the outskirts of the city.

Now I'm really in danger. There aren't any police out here. Nobody knows I'm the judge out here.

I don't have any prestige. Now I'll be waylaid. I'll be conked in the head down here for my little money purse.

Well, what is he thinking? Well, kind of like what the Israelites thought. Oh, you delivered us out of Egypt, brought us across the Red Sea so we could starve and die of thirst in the wilderness. We look at figures in the Bible and we think how ridiculous, how silly if we look at ourselves, we realize we do this very same thing.

Lot is us. The Israelites in the wilderness are us. We've got to get past it.

We've got to wake up and think, you know, we don't have to stay in this condition. If we believe what God says, then we're going to have to act differently. We're going to have to do something different.

There ought to be a change. There ought to be progress in our life. How long are we going to stay in the environs of Sodom? How long are we going to give lip service, hospitality to the messenger, but not heed what the messenger says? This is Lot's big mistake.

He accepts the messengers, shelters the messenger, hail fellow well-met to the messenger, will defend the messengers against the crowd, but when the messenger

delivers his message, oh no, oh no, my lords, please no. I can't do that. Something bad will happen to me if I do that.

Well, from our perspective, and that's what this story is supposed to remind us of. That's what this record, this historical record is supposed to communicate to us. This is us.

If we don't wake up and decide what our reality is going to be. Sooner or later, push comes to shove. Sooner or later, we choose whether we're going to believe our experience, our mindset, our perception of the world as it is, which is what Lot's doing here.

Or, like Abraham, we say, 100-year-old man having a son? Okay. My descendants? I don't have any children. I'm old.

God says I'm going to have descendants that are unnumbered. Okay. Alright.

I'll operate on that basis. God credits it for righteousness. And with the righteousness of God comes all the potential in the world for transformation, for reflecting the glory of God, putting on the new man.

Lot can't see it. He can't wrap his mind around that. His vision is too small.

It's too myopic. And he's only concerned about himself. He'll throw his daughters out there before he'll take personal responsibility.

Some evil will overtake me and I will die. Verse 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. Let me compromise.

This is on the edge of the plain. Let me just go to the edge of the plain. I'll live.

You can do what you want to do. I can do what I want to do. I will not have had to really leave.

I'll be in this little town. And a lot of us as believers, this is the definition of the broad road that goes through the wide gate that leads to destruction in terms of fruit in our lives. Just the bare minimum.

Let me just get to the edge of the judgment of God. Let me just get out of the main path of the fire and brimstone. But I don't want to climb the mountain.

Let me just get kind of out of the way. Let me just get to the edge. Compromise.

He doesn't want to leave the plain of Sodom. He loved it. That's why he went there in the first place.

And he has to be dragged to get out of the center of it. And here are angels from God who are about to blast this entire plain and Lot doesn't want to go. Fear.

Irrational concern for self. It's amazing, but if we think about it, we do this very same thing. He said to him, See, I have favored you concerning this thing also.

God is going to let Lot do this. God is not going to force him up the mountain. The angels could have grabbed a hold of him and dragged him up the mountain, but they don't.

If all he wants to do is the bare minimum, he says, I will favor you concerning this thing. I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. And it's interesting.

There's a word play here. When Lot says it's a little city, there's a T-S-A-R component in the word for it being little. And T-S-A-R winds up being T-S-O-A-R.

So are. And there's a word play that, Well, it's just a little city and God will preserve it. It's not as bad as Sodom.

It's not as big as Sodom. Because Lot is there, this squirming, squeamish, despicable guy. In his rejection and his failure, he's going to go to Zohar.

But this is how much God honors his righteousness. It's like balls on a pool table. The righteousness of Abraham extends to Lot and to his family.

And here's Lot, who by association is being spared. And because he goes to a city, God is going to spare that city and have all the cities in the plain. Zohar is the only one that doesn't get destroyed.

And Lot doesn't even stay there. The angel says, Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there. He uses the very same phrase as Lot uses up in verse 19.

Lot says, I cannot go to the mountains. And the angel uses the very same phrase in Hebrew. I cannot do anything until... He says, You can't go to the mountains? Well, I can't destroy the city until you leave.

I can't follow the commands of God until you obey. And God, in a sense, has predicated his implementation of judgment on getting Lot out of there. You can't judge it until you get Lot out.

But the funny thing is, it's not the argument that Abraham made, is it? It's not the presence of the righteous in the city. It's Abraham's righteousness that is delivering Lot. There aren't ten righteous in the city.

There's actually not even one righteous in the city. The only righteous person in the area is Abraham. And the city is not going to be spared, but Lot is.

And even the city that Lot flees to in failure is spared because of the righteousness of God. The possession of the righteousness of God is an incredible gift. We possess the righteousness of Christ.

And it transcends anything we see in this passage. The righteousness of Abraham in believing the promise of God is enough to deliver Lot and his family from Sodom. It's enough to deliver this little town.

Think what the righteousness of Christ is in terms of consideration by God. You and I have the righteousness of Jesus Christ. If you want something that's good for humility, think about that.

What did we do to deserve the righteousness of Christ? But we have it. And what a great compelling motivation it ought to be to us to seize and lay hold of the grace of God in our thought life, in our attitudes, in our behavior. There ought to be some changes.

We ought to be different now than we were a few months ago, a few years ago. Doesn't matter how young we are, how old we are, how long in the tooth we are in terms of the study of the Word of God. How much transformation does it take to go from Lot to Jesus Christ? Well, that's the path that we're on, and none of us have gotten to the far end of that spectrum, so there ought to be some changes.

If we're in the process of being transformed, where's the transformation? If we don't see a change, where's the problem? We need to find it, because the grace of God is there. The power of God is there in the form of His Spirit and His Word, and it ought to be making a difference. Look for the difference.

If there's not a difference, look for the problem. Are we like Lot? Can we just not really believe that that reality is there, that there's deliverance, that we can climb the mountain, that we can escape the environment of Sodom? Is the power of God not great enough? How ridiculous! Where's the problem? In the deliverance of Lot, why is Lot not Abraham? Why is he not the heir of promise? Is the problem with God, or is the problem with Lot? Lot just can't see it. He just won't lay hold of it.

And that's our problem. Well, we can change it. We've got free will.

We have this example in the Word of God, and it ought to compel us. It ought to constrain us. It ought to motivate us.

This afternoon and tomorrow can be a different day. The power of God can change my thought life. It can change my conversation.

It can change my attitudes. It can change my thinking. I can move in the direction of Abraham.

I can move in the direction of Christ. There's no reason not to. There ought to be a difference.

If the power of God is real, if the future, if the hope that Scripture puts before us is real, that's a far greater reality than the small finger work it's going to take for God to change our souls. But we've got to seize and lay hold of it. We've got to accept the Word of the Messenger.

We've got to heed it and treat it as reality, or we're going to end up like Lot. And how does Lot end up? The sun had risen on the earth when Lot entered Zoar. The Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah from the Lord out of the heavens.

He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. And this is the thing we all remember out of this story, and the Bible almost overlooks it. Just one quick phrase in Hebrew, His wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

We think, wow, anybody that makes a movie of this, they have special effect. I saw this one time on the Turner thing where they had the Abraham story, and she looks back. I mean, they spend, I don't know, 20, 25 seconds.

She looks back, and then you see this. She starts turning white from the bottom up, and she turns sort of like a statue. And it's a big special effect thing.

The Bible just barely glances over it. Incidental, because this is not the point of the story. It's a detail.

But we think, wow, turned into a pillar of salt. Lot might as well have turned into a pillar of salt at this point. Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord.

He looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain. He saw, and behold, the smoke of the land, which went up like the smoke of a furnace. Does Abraham know that Lot's been delivered? I don't think so.

When Abraham goes out and looks, he sees the smoke, and he says, well, I guess there weren't ten righteous in the city. And as far as Abraham knows, Lot and his family are goners. There's no indication.

Abraham doesn't say anything. He doesn't fall down on his face and cry before the Lord. He looks out, and he sees the justice of God.

And he's silent. All the other times we've seen Abraham, when he appears in the story, he says something, he does something. Here, all he does is stand and look.

He doesn't say a word. He doesn't say anything to God. God doesn't say anything to him.

He just stands and sees the smoke of God's judgment ascending from Sodom. Abraham is not in it. And Abraham doesn't really even know what the effect of God's grace has been.

It's invisible to him. His intercession and his righteousness have delivered Lot and his two daughters and delivered the town of Zoar. Abraham doesn't really even know it.

A lot of times, the fruit of our lives is invisible to us, and we may not know that there has been a difference made. But it's not important. What's important is God knows.

God's righteousness and justice are intact. 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. 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.

He was afraid not to dwell in Zoar at first. Now he's afraid to dwell there. You just can't find anything good to say about Lot.

He and his two daughters dwelt in a cave. So he's in a cave. He's living in a hole in the ground.

The firstborn said to the younger, Our father is old. There is no man on the earth to come into us, as is the custom of all the earth. Why? Because all the men have gone up in flames.

Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him that we may preserve the lineage of our father. This makes me sort of question. I really wonder if these girls, when the crowd was surrounding the house, Lot said, I've got these two virgin daughters that have not known a man.

These seem like pretty knowledgeable women to me. They know how to get a guy drunk and take advantage of him, because that's what they're going to do to their father. They made their father drink wine that night.

The firstborn went in and lay with their father. He did not know when she lay down or when she arose. He did not know.

Lot doesn't know very much. He doesn't seem to know what God is up to. He's living in the dark.

He's in a cave. It's nighttime. The whole setting of the story is Lot's in the dark.

And this is where we end up when we don't heed the word of God, when we don't pursue the grace of God and take advantage of his deliverance. You're in the cave, in the dark, being taken advantage of. And there's an irony here, because Lot was going to toss his

daughters to the crowd in his own interest.

He felt like he needed to preserve these messengers. So he was going to let his daughters be taken advantage of physically. Well, now he himself is being taken advantage of physically by his daughters for their goals.

And you feel like, well, these daughters and this father, they kind of deserve each other. His low esteem for his daughters, he was going to toss them to the crowd. Well, they don't have much esteem for him.

They're just going to use him so they can have some offspring. It's just a real despicable ending. They made their father drink wine the second night.

And the same thing happens with the younger daughter. Verse 36, Both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab.

He is the father of the Moabites to this day. I think I mentioned the first time we read this that that's the preposition name in front of Ab, which is father, and it means from father. That's a popular etymology of this, from the father.

But there's also been some research done. There is an ancient Semitic word for water, which starts M-A-W. And it may, in fact, be that this means water of the father or seed of the father as this son's name.

Because of the O in there, they can't really explain where the O comes from if it's just the preposition M. And so it's probable, I think, after looking into this more carefully, that his name literally means water of the father or seed of the father type of thing. He is the father of the Moabites to this day. The younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ami.

He is the father of the people of Ammon to this day. And Ben, of course, means son. Am can mean people.

It can also mean kinsman. And in this case, son of my kinsman is a good translation. So both of these names basically refer back to their origin.

At this point, after verse 38, Lot disappears from the Old Testament Scriptures. There's nothing more. We don't know anything further.

Abraham never refers to him. He disappears. So you can't think of a more ignominy.