

God's Justice is Awesome

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 January 2013

Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Genesis 19. We'll read the first 29 verses of the chapter. The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city.

When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. My lords, he said, please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning.

No, they answered, we will spend the night in the square. But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate.

Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom, both young and old, surrounded the house. They called to Lot.

Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them. Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, No, my friends, don't do this wicked thing.

[1:15] Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you and you can do what you like with them.

But don't do anything to these men for they have come under the protection of my roof. Get out of our way, they replied. And they said, This fellow came here as an alien and now he wants to play the judge.

We'll treat you worse than them. They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door. But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door.

Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness, so that they could not find the door. The two men said to Lot, Do you have anyone else here?

Sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.

[2:23] So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters. He said, Hurry and get out of this place because the Lord is about to destroy the city.

But his sons-in-law thought he was joking. With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, Hurry, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished.

When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them.

As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, Flee for your lives. Don't look back. And don't stop anywhere in the plain.

Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away. But Lot said to them, No, my lords, please. Your servant has found favor in your eyes and you've shown great kindness to me in sparing my life.

[3:29] But I can't flee to the mountains. This disaster will overtake me and I'll die. Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small.

Let me flee to it. It is very small, isn't it? Then my life will be spared. He said to him, Very well, I will grant this request too.

I will not overthrow the town you speak of. But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it. That is why the town was called Zoar.

By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah from the Lord out of the heavens.

Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities and also the vegetation in the land. But Lot's wife looked back when she became a pillar of salt.

[4:32] Early the next morning, Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the Lord. He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.

So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.

Oh God, your justice is amazing. Could be wrong, but those are probably not words that you have said lately.

There are a lot of things that we like to worship God for. I don't think that justice is very high on the list near the top. Justice is something that we have trouble praising God for.

The Bible, though, doesn't have any of that reluctance. In a few weeks, we're going to memorize Psalm 36.6. And it says this, Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, and your justice is like the great deep.

[5:53] Your justice is awesome, awe-inspiring. When we flew over the ocean, when we went to Ethiopia, the ocean is so big.

You're going 600 miles an hour in an airplane, and it takes you six hours to fly across the Atlantic Ocean. Your justice is like the great deep.

He's talking about the sea, the ocean. It's big. It's glorious. Listen to these other passages of Scripture. Just a small sampling. Clouds and thick darkness surround him.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. The king is mighty. He loves justice. But the Lord Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness.

In many Christians' minds, God's justice is sort of the dark underbelly of God. It's not something we are very comfortable with.

[7:04] It's not something that we, if we were honest, that we delight in, that we enjoy, that thrills our hearts. Instead, we have a tendency to skirt around it, to play it down, to skip over it.

Why do we do that? Well, I think it's because we are not as comfortable in the gospel and faith in Jesus Christ as we should be.

We aren't so sure if we are right with him. And so God's justice is not something that we can actually look upon as wonderful and something that we could sing about.

It's not until we are wrapped in the righteousness of Christ, secure in God's favor because of what Jesus has done, because we've cast our whole life on him, that we can actually look on God's justice as something that is good and praiseworthy and not our enemy, not something against us, but instead a glorious display of his goodness with Christ's righteousness on.

So with his goodness, his obedience, on my account, and I'm wearing it, then I can look on God's justice and say, it is good. I love it.

[8:30] I want to sing about it. Now, I hope some of these thoughts help us as we look through Genesis 19. It's not a pretty picture, is it?

It wasn't easy to read. It wasn't easy to hear. But so often it is the hard conversations that are the best conversations to have, the most uncomfortable conversations where things inside of us get uncovered that are, that end up being the best.

Genesis 19 takes us away from our comfortable lives and it makes us face reality. Reality. And God says, this is real.

This is how I am. This is who you are. And you need to come to terms with that. You need to look in the mirror. We need to talk about this.

And so it is my prayer that God would help us, that the Spirit of God would help us as we go through this passage and that He would teach us. We have five lessons from Genesis 19 and my intention when I first started was to get to these five.

[9:53] I don't think I'm going to get there. I'm just going to get to the first two and then we're going to do the next three, Lord willing, next week. But here is the first lesson. First of two that we're covering this evening and it's this.

The judge of all the earth will do right. The judge of all the earth will do right. Now it's been weeks and weeks.

I'm not even sure how long. I think it might have been November if I'm calculating correctly. but we were back in Genesis 18 and remember the big question in Genesis 18 was will not the judge of all the earth do right.

Remember that intercessory prayer that Abraham had with God as God was considering destroying the city of Sodom. And Abraham asked the rhetorical question will not the judge of all the earth do right.

And that's how he began his argument of well what about if you find 50 righteous people in the city. What about 45? What about 40? Will God destroy the righteous with the wicked and so pervert and twist justice?

[11:09] That's impossible. And so Abraham argues will not the judge of all the earth do right. right. The question is answered. It's assumed in chapter 18 and it is answered definitively and for sure in chapter 19 the judge will do right.

Sodom has been doomed for a long time now. When we were first introduced to Sodom in Genesis 13:10 when Lot and Abraham separated and Lot looked down towards the plains towards the city of Sodom it says this this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

All the way back then we knew we were reading and paying attention that Sodom had a date with destruction and it's like watching a disaster movie.

I'm sure you've seen these kind of movies. I watched one not too long ago called Super Volcano and well you know what it's about don't you just from the title it's about a super volcano and the super volcano goes off it wouldn't be a movie if it didn't go off well everyone knows the basic plot line right from the very beginning the only question is will anyone be saved and how will it happen will anyone be saved and how will they be saved well Sodom has been doomed for a long time right from the very beginning we knew that it was going to be destroyed the only question is will anyone be saved and how will it happen and so the movie theater goes dark on this our movie the previews are over and the movie begins and the sun is setting in the west over the sea and two men two angels walk in to Sodom and Lot is sitting at the gate and he's just like uncle

Abraham he goes into hospitality mode right away he wants to show them hospitality they want to stay in the town square and he's adamant and he says no no you can't do that you can't do that don't do that come with me come with me and when they hesitate he overwhelms them and says no no you have to come and we think it might just be because Lot is hospitable but there's something else going on isn't there well why have the angels come why are they visiting it's because the Lord sent them on this fact finding mission remember what he said in Genesis 18 I'm going to go down and I will see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that I've heard so I've!

[14:07] but before I judge I'm going to see things first hand and so he sends these angels to see if it's as bad as what people have been saying now my wife does this to me sometimes she says go check the kids room out and so there I do there I go I open the door and I show up on their doorstep and I have a look around to see if round is it as really is it as bad as people really say evidence piles up pretty quickly doesn't it it's not at all pretty we read it and I don't think we need to repeat it as the scene unfolds it becomes crystal clear that the city is ripe it's past ripe it's just rotten so rampant aggressive homosexuality marks the city all the men of the city from every part of the city as said but

I think we would miss the full picture if we said that's all there was to it if that's all there is to their wickedness I think if we understand the Bible's total answer as to why Sodom was destroyed we would realize that that!

homosexuality that we see in this passage was not the beginning but it was the very end of their destruction of their sin it was the last black spot on this evil wicked painting so why did God destroy Sodom Ezekiel 16 gives us an insight listen to what the Lord says there now this was the sin of your sister Sodom he's talking to Jerusalem and he's comparing it to Sodom now this was the sin of your sister Sodom she and her daughters listen to what he says you were they were arrogant overfed and unconcerned they did not help the poor they were haughty and they did detestable things before me therefore I did away with them as you have seen it wasn't just their immorality that came up before the Lord it was their luxury they were overfed they lived for their bellies they lived for the pleasures of this world and this life and they had lots of them it was their greed!

it was their brutal unconcern they didn't care about other people when it came down to it they would rather feed themselves than to feed the poor and the whole city was so prosperous and so overfed that they didn't care for the weak they didn't care for the needy the Lord destroyed them so their

immorality was the consummation was the fulfillment was the final straw of their wickedness and these two things often go together luxury and sexual immorality and it's no wonder that in our culture that we have caved wholesale to the homosexual agenda and it's no wonder that we make so little headway in the fight against abortion and it's so rampant because babies are hard on the pocketbook babies don't make for an easy life and so let them die and don't talk about purity don't talk about abstinence see luxury and sexual immorality they go hand in hand they go hand to hand in our culture and they go hand in hand in every culture so every man does what is right in his own eyes the people of

Sodom were haughty they were too proud they couldn't detect or hate their sin did you notice what they said in verse 9 look what they said in verse 9 when Lot saying no don't don't do this this fellow came here as an alien and now he wants to play the judge doesn't that sound like our culture who are you to judge me who are you to tell me that you don't like what I'm doing now what is the point of telling this story except to say that there is no doubt there is no doubt that Sodom will be destroyed and there is no doubt that Sodom deserved!

[18 : 59] to be destroyed! That God was right in doing it! And this is a view of God's justice that we need! God's justice is not malicious!

It's right! And so when we look at the smoking remains of the city in the morning there is no doubt that God did what was right!

The judge of all the earth will do right! Now if you are outside of Jesus if you don't have that righteousness that I talked about at the beginning where you have never come to the place where like we saw this morning where you prayed Lord save me if you're not there but you're outside of Jesus doesn't that scare you it ought to are you so hard that you don't feel that we just read a chapter about God destroying cities and a day with none surviving and we find out that he did it because they were wicked he did it because they were sinful and that's what faces you

God's justice is not something that you can praise God for because it stands against you not because God is mean and it's not because God is cruel because you're sinful you're evil and if you're not comfortable with accepting that and saying that about yourself then you're not yet ready for Jesus to save you and what I mean is Jesus came to save sinners not the righteous he came to save people like sodom people from sodom he came to save people that were willing to say you know what I'm a sinner I deserve judgment I deserve wrath Jesus came to save sinners not the righteous not the people that have these perfect records or so they think and it's to you and this is the good news it's to the sinful it's to sinners that

God invites to Christ it's to you that God extends his hand and he points his finger to Jesus Christ and he says run to Jesus and be saved he doesn't want you to be destroyed God's justice is not his meanness or his cruelty he's going to do right but now he is standing and he's saying do not be destroyed there is still time if you run to Jesus he will save you get his righteousness believe in him you see because it's not at Sodom where you see the great ocean depths of God's justice it's not in the smoke it's not in the ash of the city it's at the cross it's at the cross it's at the cross where God judged his own son that we see

[22 : 44] God's justice we also see his mercy so I have a question was it right for Jesus to die like he did was God just in doing that did the judge of all the earth do right yes yes when Christ joined himself to sinners when he joined himself to us when he said I'll take these he took their sin upon him and he became sin and so all of our idolatry all of our luxury loving ways that we love and know so much about here in our country all of our ingratitude and all of our lust all of our selfishness and unbelief and greed he took it all and

God poured out his wrath upon him that shows us God's justice because when everything in his fatherly heart would be saying spare him spare him don't put him through this don't make him suffer like that when that sin was found upon him he judged him because that he was showing the full depths of his justice but he was doing it in such a way that he could be merciful to us see it's justice and grace see now all of our sins all of those bad things that we have done they can be taken away not because God just erases them and makes us you know it's just like they never happened it's not that God ignores them that wouldn't be just instead he judged them in Jesus upon Jesus and so we receive grace we receive something we do not deserve we receive forgiveness and God doesn't hold our sin against us and so we sin and then we don't get punished that's what grace means but it happened on the altar of Jesus and the justice that Jesus received grace and it's here when I'm under the shadow of the cross and I'm experiencing that love and that forgiveness and that grace

that now

I can look at God's justice and say wow that is beautiful that is amazing see wrath and justice is not the ugly side of God it is not the ugly side it's the side that it takes a time I think for us to come to grips with but it is not the ugly side of God wrath is the goodness of God and I don't mean his benevolence or his generosity I don't mean that I mean his goodness the fact that he is good and it's his goodness when he is confronted with sin and sinners I said this before but your biggest problem is that God is good and you are not he's holy he's righteous he's just he loves justice he loves righteousness he loves people obeying his law and it's right that he should and he's good and that's beautiful and he doesn't compromise it for a single second not a single inch he loves justice and that is glorious and it is good the Lord the judge of all the earth will do right and see now the wrath of

God has already been poured out on me but not on me but on Jesus on my substitute I've already received God's justice in my substitute and now there's nothing left for me to suffer there's nothing left for me to do except a glory in both his grace and his justice the judge of all the earth will do right are you safe in Christ there's only one place where you are safe from God's justice where you can be a friend of God's justice and it's in Christ so are you safe in Christ what are you waiting for what are you waiting for will you waver like Lot did we're gonna see this next week he hesitated he's on the brink of destruction and he hesitates will you do that will you look back like Lot's wife did don't wait don't wait stick your fingers in your ears like

Christian did in Pilgrim's Progress he stuck his fingers in his ears as he ran out of the city of destruction and he said life life he was running from destruction and he wanted life that's what the angels did repeatedly in this passage they say Malat Malat flee flee flee flee they were more ready for Lot to be saved than Lot was to be saved that's because they're like God in that sense he's more ready for us to be saved than we are and so he says flee flee but not to the hills that's where the angels were pointing them not to the hills but to Christ this is Jesus and so don't pause for anyone or anything don't wait for anyone to come with you don't wait for a spouse don't wait for a child don't wait for a parent this is a flight that you have to do by yourself and you can't worry about what other people are thinking or doing but flee right to the cross because sinner that is the only place that God's justice was your friend that's the only place where you'll be safe the judge of all the earth will do right he will do right upon you that's lesson one lesson two is shorter and it's this living like the world makes your witness a joke living like the world makes your witness a joke in some ways this is the most tragic part of this whole tragic story let's read verses 12 through 14 again the two men said to lot do you have anyone else here sons in law sons or daughters or anyone else in the city who belongs to you get them out of here because we are going to destroy this place the outcry to the

[30:31] Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it and so lot went and he spoke to his sons in law who were pledged to marry his daughters and he said hurry and get out of this place because the Lord is about to destroy the city but the sons in law thought he was joking let's just think about this for a minute hasn't God called you to do hasn't God called you Christian to do what these angels did that he told lot to do doesn't God want us to be going out to others and saying flee the wrath to come saving men rescuing men telling them get out of here you're in great danger aren't you brothers and sisters

God's ambassadors to this world that's how the apostle Paul thought about himself and spoke about himself listen to what he said in 2nd Corinthians 5 we are therefore Christ ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us we implore you a strong language we implore you on Christ's behalf be reconciled to God and he wrote a little before that since then we know what it is to fear the Lord we try to persuade!

men brothers and sisters God God has called us just like he called Lot to go out into the city and try to persuade men to implore them to be saved Lot knew destruction was coming and so he went to his sons in law and he said get out of here and they laughed why why because there was next to nothing in Lot's life that would make them think that he was being serious to take him seriously there was there was hardly anything that he could point to that would back up his message so when he comes witnessing they think he's a joke what are you talking about why are you saying this you're just like us you just live here you're living for the same things you live in the city why are you talking about the city being destroyed

Peter in 2nd Peter says Lot was a righteous man he was a righteous man but there was hardly anything!

in his life to suggest that to back it up Peter says he was grieved at the wickedness that was in the city his righteous heart was grieved at what he saw but that grief never seemed to move him to any action it never moved him further away from the city everything about Lot's life was moving more and more towards this world so he looked over the plain and he saw that the land was good the city was prosperous and so he chose he chose the plain of Sodom Genesis 13 12 he's near the city in Genesis 14 12 he's in the city in Genesis 19 1 he's sitting at the gate of the city now that's important because that's where the important people of the city worked that's where they did their business and that's where business was carried out that's where the important men were so now he's not just a nobody in the city he's a somebody and we find out that his daughters are pledged to be married to these men that are from the city and so do you get the!

[34 : 54] He lived for this world and look where it ends for his relationship for whatever he was saying to himself about why he was in Sodom he comes telling them about the wrath to come and they laugh at him now there's a lesson there isn't there there's a question that we need to ask ourselves brothers and sisters does your life point others to Jesus or does your life blur your Christian message where people don't even know it to take you seriously or not or what to think about you does your life say i'm not living for this world does your life say you know what this world is going to be judged and destroyed what the world lives for i don't live for what the world is so impressed with i'm just not impressed with it what the world is seeking after and yearning for and thinking this is where life is and this is how you should do things i'm not buying it or are you consumed with the same things that this world is same toys same sports the same movies the same priorities the same way of thinking and you said you can you can say well i don't want to be amish or something i don't want to be stick out like a sore thumb or something and of course not of course not but if you were to go to men or women if you were to go to where you worked and you started witnessing would they say where did this come from what are you talking about or young people if you started to say you know this world is it's going to be destroyed and so i'm not going to live for it i'm going to do different things i'm going to live for Jesus no matter what you guys say would they laugh at you not because you're taking a stand but because where did that come from your your message in your life they don't look anything alike well if that's you can i give you some good news and some encouragement some good news and some encouragement Lot was a compromised Christian can we at least say that he was certainly if he was a righteous man but he was compromised he was compromising but God still delivered him in the middle of all this justice and wrath there's this picture of God's grace of saving Lot he didn't deserve it but God still delivered him and if you have been living a compromised life brother or sister you can be so thankful that God's love is greater than all of your sin and your shame and tomorrow you can wake up and say God thank you for your love i love you Lord thank you that you do not treat me like my sins deserve Lord let that love like a fetter bind my wandering heart to thee prone to wander Lord i feel it prone to leave the God i love oh take my heart and seal it seal it for like courts above if you're a compromised Christian you need to repent

repent you need to start living a life worthy of the gospel if you don't your witness will be a joke so what will motivate you to repent fear should be part of it fear should be part of it this if this world is going to be destroyed and you're living for this world then how will you be saved fear should have motivated Lot to live differently than he did it should work the same in our life but also the love of Christ should move you towards repentance it's the ultimate uh motivation for us to move towards repentance to walk away from our sin and from our fear of man and walk in obedience we saw it last week as we read John 17 Jesus said for them i sanctify myself for them i sanctify myself that they too may be truly sanctified Jesus sanctified himself for you you know what that means it means he said no to this world for you and when the world would have gladly crowned him and given him every honor he said no no why did he do that for you for you for them i do it and so love for you made him leave heaven and come to earth and love for you brothers and sisters it made him go without a bed or a house he said no to everything this world could offer and love kept him up all night praying and love woke him up in the morning when he was so tired to go to those quiet places and pray and love kept him walking mile after mile in the heat of the day and love for you made him say no to the legions of angels that would have come just like that if he would have whispered to save him from this cross and love for you drove him to put himself and all that the world could give

him all the pleasures this world could give him it drove him to put all those things on the altar and himself included all that we could truly be sanctified i sanctify myself i set myself apart for them i do that now brothers and sisters it's in the shadow of that great love that we find help and grace and power to stop living like this world and to start traveling to the celestial city it's it's there in the shadow of that great love that we have something to say to this hell-bound world we have something to say we have a message we we sang about these things when you're so filled up with the goodness of god you talk freely of it and when you're so filled up with the love of god you will talk freely about it to sinners who need it it won't be a foreign tongue it will be your natural language so if you're going to live a life worthy of the gospel the life that lot wasn't living if you're going to live a life worthy of the gospel where your life doesn't make a joke out of your testimony or your witness then you need to live in light of the gospel you need to live in light of it you need to believe it you need to hold it as precious and dear and keep those promises before you and so give yourselves then

to that message this week play its scenes before you of jesus life and death and resurrection and and dive in and delve into the word of god and get those promises and find that the spirit of god is telling you that god loves you that's the reason the spirit is given to christians so give yourselves then to the gospel this week get into the word and pray for the spirit to give you a sense of god's love and his faithfulness and his the way he forgives us and then you'll what you'll find is that you have a witness and that your life is living up to that witness and then you'll be able to praise god for his grace and his justice let's pray heavenly father i just i ask you to uh...

be merciful to us as we go on our way help us to know what it is to fear the lord and and all that that means to respect and honor and adore and love pray lord that you would help us to fear you but then also to know the sweetness of your love and your grace in jesus christ thank you that you do do not treat us like our sins deserve you would have justly consigned us to the very same fate as sodom but you had mercy on us and when we were blind and we were going our own way and when we were deaf to you you called us you gave us new life and new ears and we thank you for that grace we thank you for the grace of our lord jesus who when we were wretched wanderers would live for us and die for us and love us thank you lord jesus for that grace pray that you would then bind our hearts to you this week that we would have lives that are worthy of the gospel that that don't make a joke out of our profession but clearly and beautifully and graciously point to christ we need you if we're going to do this this these fruit these fruits do not grow on our natural tree they have to come from the vine even jesus so lord jesus i pray that we would be full of the righteousness that comes through you this week that we would be living in worship living in love for you that we would know what it is to have fellowship and communion with you this week in jesus name i pray amen