

A Contrast of Conditions

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- [0 : 00] If you have Bibles, I want to turn to Genesis chapter 19. Genesis chapter 19, I mentioned in a remind message this week a book, and it's kind of just an overflow of something else that's been going on since October.
- I meet with men at 6 o'clock and at 9 o'clock on Tuesday mornings, and we read a common book together and just discuss that book, Bible-themed book.
- Right now I'm whooping him like a dog, and he's whooping me too. A.W. Towser, we'll finish that up this week, take a couple of months off and start back. And as I began to prepare for the fall and thought about, well, not really fall, but the end of the summer when we start back and thought about what to read, this is a book that I had in mind.
- I've used it before in that kind of capacity, and as I thought about it, I thought, no, this might be a good one for everybody to read. Need something to read over summer that will do us well and maybe open our eyes to some stuff.
- And so I bought several copies, and we have them available. It's called The Unserved Christian, and interesting work from Dean in Syria. And I was in a conference last, two weeks ago, and Dean spoke at that conference, and I went to a breakout session for him, and he spoke again there.
- [1 : 16] He pastors a church in Tallahassee, City Church, a church he planted, and reaching a young generation for Christ in a powerful way. And when I got the case of books in, I took a picture of it and sent him a message on Twitter and said, Dean direct messaged me, and he did.
- And so I said, when we finish this book, is there a possibility for us to get you on Zoom and have the opportunity to just meet with you and talk to you about what the book is made up of?
- So we'll have a special session for that in August or something like that. And so if you're interested in anything like that, I don't have a dog in a hunt. Church is paying taxes on it, actually. So it's \$10 a book.
- Some guys, when I mentioned it Tuesday morning, they were so excited about it that they started throwing money at me. I said, this is not a poker game. We are buying books anyway. So they've got some prepaid down here.
- If you paid me the other day, I don't know who you are. I wasn't keeping up. But if you paid me the other day, it's down here on the front. If not, Jeff will be in the back and have those books available. And if we run out, we'll buy some more.
- [2 : 23] So you won't be tested on it. I actually thought about what I put in the bulletin. I told her to put a good slow eye-opening. It's not really slow. It's kind of a fast read.
- But you can read it slow, is my point, because it's not that big a book. So enough with the commercial. Genesis chapter 19. What I love about God's Word, a lot of things I love about God's Word, but when I'm reading Abraham, what I love about God's Word is that he gives us so many life stories, biographies in Scripture that we can learn from these guys, especially in the Old Testament.

And I believe God places those there for us to not only understand how he established what we have in our faith today, but I believe he also pointed out everything about these guys' lives so that we could learn from them.

The biographies of the men and the women in the Old Testament particularly are placed there so that we can learn from their triumphs, and we can learn from their mistakes, and we can see how God works and how he moves and how we are to respond to him.

And we get to see family relationships. We get to see where it goes right and where it goes wrong so that we can learn from those things. And so we spent some time in Abraham.

[3 : 48] I don't apologize for that because I believe there's great significance to this. I was coming home from that conference a couple of weeks ago in Charlotte, and one of the guys that spoke there, Dr. Bob Smith, wonderful preaching professor from Beeson Seminary, he said that one thing he's done, they ask about how you prepare for preaching and what do you do and those type of things.

He said, one thing that I've started doing is I've started listening to Scripture. I just listen to Scripture, listen to somebody read it, and just take in the text more so and just focus on that.

And so I got an app as I was leaving and put that on Genesis chapter 12, and for one hour listened to somebody with a slightly British accent read the life of Abraham to me.

And it was amazing, although I'm studying it in depth, it was amazing that just by doing that, it helped me to see the intricacies of that. As well, let me say that we'll always try to post the Scripture that I'm reading from on the screen so that it's there before you and all those things.

But don't underestimate the value of having a copy of God's Word with you. Sometimes on Saturday night I get to scratching a little bit and changing some things and adding some things and those type things along the way that may not make it to the screen.

[5 : 14] And there's some things that in today's passage, for instance, that you might want to underline and to look at. And so there's great value in having your copy of God's Word as well as I believe it's a wonderful testimony to have it as well.

And so anyway, enough of that. But I'm thankful for the Word of God telling us the ins and the outs. And it does tell us that. And it tells us that way in some ways kind of uncomfortable way, quite honestly.

Today we're looking at Abraham's nephew more so. His name is Lot. And if you remember some time ago, we looked at the fact that they, when God told Abraham to leave his family and to travel, he brought Lot with him.

And that didn't work out so well. And so they had to split along the way. Both of them had quite an entourage or a household. And they began to have some conflicts along the way.

And so they split. And when Abraham gave Lot a choice of the direction that he would go in, he chose to go east. Because he saw, he foresaw some prosperity there.

[6 : 18] Honestly, the land looked more fertile. And he headed out toward the most fertile fields. But what he thought would be promise and would bring promise instead led to much of his demise.

What started as simply devising his own plan led to wondering. And a lot of times that happens, by the way. When we devise our own plan, we have a tendency to wonder.

And what starts as little sins leads to great ones. I just want you to listen how things went south when Lot went east. It's in Genesis chapter 19.

Beginning in verse 1, it says this. The two angels. Now the angels that it's talking about, we previously looked at three people, three men that came to see Abraham.

And it was clearly identified to us that one of those men was God. I believe it was the pre-incarnate Christ in Scripture. And those other two men, it later said in Genesis 18, went on to Sodom.

[7 : 26] Now that we're looking at Sodom, it says the two angels. So what Scripture has done for us is identified a very unique circumstance. In the sense that three guys came to see Abraham.

One of them was in fact God incarnate. And two of them were messengers of God, or angels. And that's what it's talking about here. It says the two angels came to Sodom in the evening.

And Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth. And said, my Lord, my Lord, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet.

Then you may rise up early and go on your way. And they said, no, we'll spend the night in the town square. But he pressed them strongly. So they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread.

And they ate. But before they laid down, before they laid down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man surrounded the house. And they called to Lot, where are the men who came to see you tonight?

[8 : 30] Bring them out to us that we may know them. Lot went out to the men of the entrance. Shut the door after them and said, shut the door after him and said, I beg you, my brothers, don't act so wickedly.

Behold, I have two daughters who've not known any man. Let me bring them out to you. And do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they've come under the shelter of my room.

But they said, stand back. And they said, this fellow came to sojourn. And he's become the judge. Now we'll deal worse with you than with them.

And they pressed hard against the man Lot and drew near to break the door down. But the men reached out their hands, talking about the angels, and brought Lot into the house with him and shut the door.

And they struck, talking about the angels, struck with blindness the men who were at the entrance of the house, both small and great, so that they wore themselves out, groping for the door.

[9 : 43] Then the men said to Lot, have you anyone else here, sons-in-laws, sons, daughters, anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. For we're about to destroy this place because the outcry against his people has become great before the Lord.

And the Lord has sent us to destroy it. So Lot went out and said to his son-in-laws who were to marry his daughters, up, get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city.

But it seemed to his son-in-laws to be jesting. As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, said, up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.

But he lingered. That's an underline, by the way. But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.

And as they brought him out, one said, escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away. And Lot said to them, oh, no, my lords.

[10 : 45] Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness and saving my life. But I can't escape to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I'll die. Behold, this city is near enough to flee to, and it's a little one.

Let me escape there. Is it not a little one? And my life will be saved. He said to them, behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken.

Escape there quickly, for I can do nothing till you arrive there. Therefore, the name of the city was called Zor. The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zor. Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven.

And he overthrew those cities and all the valley and all the inhabitants of the city and what grew on the ground. But Lot's wife behind him looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord. And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley. And he looked, and behold, the smoke of the land went up like a smoke of a furnace.

[11 : 50] So it was there when God destroyed the cities of the valley. God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the mist of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.

Let's pray together. Lord, this passage is kind of overwhelming, quite honestly, to me as I read it.

To see that the mess that Lot put his family in, and the decisions that he made that cost them greatly.

God, I ask that you'll help us to learn from his experience, so that we don't make the same kind of mistakes.

But instead, Lord, that we follow your plan immediately, what you would have for us, Father. In Jesus' name, amen.

[12 : 53] Man, there's so much to dig through here. I don't have time, and you don't want me to take the time to do it. It is what it is. It's a sad situation, quite honestly.

There's some mistakes along the way that may have seemed small. Some of his mistakes might even seem smart to him, quite honestly. But it got him in a mess that continued to cost him big.

And how he handled it was foolish to say the best. But what I want to focus on this morning for a few minutes is to notice the contrast between Abraham and Lot.

Two different dudes doing two different things. Now, I will say at the beginning, Lot is called in Scripture later righteous.

So it's not that we're talking about a wicked, horrible person at all. We're talking about somebody who made bad decisions. And out of those bad decisions, we can learn to make good ones.

[14 : 00] The first difference that I want you to notice about these men are their locations. Abraham was near the great trees of Mamre where he built an altar for the Lord.

That he came back and revisited. And where God met with him. Lot was in Sodom. Sodom is the picture of the wickedness of the world in one city.

Chapter 19 is merely an example. We get the word sodomy from the city Sodom. My friend, when you sleep with trash, you smell like trash and you'll become trash.

And so was the case with Lot. You better be careful where you pitch your tent. Not only were their locations different, but their plans were different.

Genesis 18 verse 1 tells us that Abraham was sitting at the entrance of his tent. He was a nomad. He was a man on the go. Not just wondering, but being guided by God.

[15 : 02] He went when God told him to go. He went where God told him to go. And he went how God told him to go. And he stopped when God told him to stop. And God's plan for him was his plan.

Hebrews 11 verse 10 tells us this. It said, For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. In other words, he's looking beyond this world.

He just wanted to follow God. And Abraham's sights were set on bigger things. Lot, however, Genesis 19 tells us, was sitting in the gateway of the city.

Do you realize what that means? That when you have a walled city, the gateway became the lingering place.

It's where the markets were because everybody had to go through there if they were leaving town or if they were coming to town. It was a busy spot. But you know who else sat there? The sages. Those who led the city.

[16 : 02] Those who had strong influence in the town. And Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. Either means he was giving advice to the city or he was taking it from the city.

One of the others, what that means. He was a major player in that city. A town spokesman. An honoree of sorts. That's not bad unless it's a wicked city. And Lot was up to bad stuff.

Self-made stuff is the biggest problem with it. Self-made and wrong stuff. I want you to notice their plans. The third thing I want you to notice is their passions.

In Genesis 18, God appeared to Abraham along with two of his messengers, which we've determined are angels from Scripture. And when Abraham saw what appeared to be messengers from God, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them.

That's in Genesis 18, verse 2. As opposed to that, when angels in the form of two men came to Lot, Genesis 19, 1 tells us he simply got up to meet them.

[17 : 11] Now, there's a difference in hurrying out to meet somebody and just getting up to meet somebody. You want to know the difference in that is my dog and my kids.

Okay? That's the difference. Who wags their tails and meets me at the door when I get home? It's not my kids. You know? Men, if you ever wondered if your dog or your wife loves you more, I got a test for you.

Lock them both in the trunk of the car and see who's happy to see you after an hour. Don't do that.

Okay? That's a joke. Abraham had such a love for God every time he felt his presence, saw a manifestation of him, he ran to him. He had a passion.

He had a zeal for God. I've never met someone who did not have a passion for something.

[18 : 18] And Abraham had one for God. Their passions were different. Not only that, but their offerings were different. When Abraham offered to host his company, they were appreciative.

That's in Genesis 18.5. When Lot gave the identical invitation, they were first declined. That's in Genesis 19.2. But Abraham was much more personal.

He was offering himself and all that he had. Lot was simply offering his possessions. God's not interested in keeping company with your possessions.

He wants you. He wants you. And when you draw the lines in the sand of what he can have and what he can't have, that's not surrender.

surrender. God wants us. And when he has us, our possessions are his as well because he's got us. It's a priority factor of what's most important to us.

[19 : 24] But there was a difference in what they offer. Not only that, but there was a difference in their families. Chapter 18 shows us that Abraham's family was a household with purpose and working together with common priorities.

Lot had to go this alone. He had a family but they were not helping. Genesis 19 verse 3 tells us that. And then apparently they were unsettled and they were unhealthy.

In verse 14, when he told the son-in-laws what they needed to do, they didn't take him seriously. They thought he was kidding. Sin always promises a good time with fun company but it's only for a season.

Sin is the loneliest place on earth and then if without Jesus you die, you go to hell. And I want to be clear about something.

You don't go to hell with a company of friends to rejoice with there. Not at all. We'll look in detail this fall on what the scripture tells us about not only heaven but about hell.

[20 : 44] But I want you to know what stands out about hell so much is the loneliness and the absence of God's presence. the suffering primarily from the absence of God's presence.

Sin promises a good time but it lies to you. Their families were different. Not only that but their welcomes were different. Genesis 18 verse 8 tells us that Abraham joined them as they ate.

He fellowshiped with them. They conversed as they ate. Lot however went outside to turn away the wicked men. He shut the door behind him leaving his gift in the house unattended.

One is sitting down. The other is fending off. Let me ask you something. What do you do when God comes to see you? When you really sense his presence in your life?

When you really feel like he's speaking to you about a matter in your life? How do you respond to that? When God probes your heart do you sit down and sup with him?

[21 : 58] Do you fellowship with him about that? Are you like like are you trying to close out all the wickedness in your life and keep it away from God? Do you open yourself up to the Lord?

Do you open yourself up to him in prayer? when you read God's word do you open yourself up to the word of God and allow him to speak and work and move in your life?

Whereas godliness opens spiritual doors wickedness shuts them and what you'll find is when you close yourself off if you have a pattern of reading God's word in your life and I've encouraged that and I'll continue to encourage it but if you have a pattern of such like that but you're not allowing the Holy Spirit to work and move in your life you're not opening yourself up to what God would have you to show in God's word you'll grow less passion for reading God's word your passion for the Lord will dull because you're not receiving what he has to say to you you're not responding to it same thing happens if there's sin in your life and God reveals that sin and asks you to respond to it in obedience and you fail to respond to that in obedience don't you dare think that that don't affect you in your personal relationship with God and how scripture speaks to your heart and life how you're able to worship not only privately but publicly makes a huge amount of difference there was a difference in the welcomes to the

Lord not only that but there was a difference in their words from God and I mean the personal word that God gave them both got a message from the Lord Abraham received a word of blessing in Genesis 8 18 verse 10 he tells in the blessing will be the promise of Isaac coming in about a year the long awaited promise would finally be fulfilled now Lot on the other hand was warned in Genesis 19 15 and he said he and his family were to leave that city that city that he set out on his own desires and went to it's interesting to me that we often seek what we do not need I want you to think about this for just a minute I hope you get this it seems in the times when we're in sin we need God's directive warning but we seek his love we just want God to love us in spite of what we're doing we don't really want to change what we're doing we just want him to love us in spite of that and get pretty defensive about that sometimes but when we're striving to please him and living for him we seek his direction we want his direction and we think less about his love and his grace because we're seeking the Lord and we want his direction and in reality it happens just the opposite because when we're dirty and we don't want to hear it God gives us a directive warning it's what he did a lot and when we're seeking his face yet failing too much to make us content he loves us he loves us through that because he knows we're imperfect and he loves us through that he knows what we need whether we're ready for it or not he knows that so I ask you how is

God speaking to you what are you looking for and how is he speaking to you are you looking for some type warning the reality is if you're seeking the Lord with your life and there's not manifest sin recurring sin in your life and you're seeking the Lord and you're asking God show me this and show me this and show me this I'll tell you he'll flood you with his love and grace is what he'll do and if there's things in your life that you're trying to hide from God what a joke that don't work but if there's things in your life that you want to hold on to and you don't want to give over to the Lord and you're trying to hide from God you just want him to love you in spite of that I mean I know I'm doing wrong things but God I just want you to put your grace upon me and love me in spite of that he'll give you a direct warning and you'll feel that then you'll get mad at the preacher because sometimes it came from him and that ain't the truth that ain't the way that works God knew before the foundation of the earth what people needed to hear today in this room and so I trust him with that

[26 : 36] I had a preacher one time tell me unless you finish your sermon on Saturday night you're not being sensitive to the Holy Spirit because you're not watching what's going on in the world and I said dude I believe that for the foundation of the earth God knew exactly what I was to preach when I was to preach it and who I was to preach it to and I think he knew what was going on in their lives and what they needed to hear so I don't have to figure out the world nor the congregation I just have to stick to God's word just preach what he tells me to preach and let it stick where it may because God will speak to you exactly where you are and give you what you need how must God speak to you based upon your life right now there was also a difference in their walks whereas in Genesis 18 16 and 17 it shares with us that Abraham walked with God and God shared his plan with him in chapter 19 verse 20 lot hesitated to walk in his grace and God told him to flee and in verse 16 it said that he lingered

God told him to flee and he lingered there's a passage in Joseph's life where Potiphar's wife pursues him tempts him it's very forward with him to ask him to be with her and scripture says that he ran so hard he left his coat in her hand that's what Lot needed to do about Sodom he just needed to get out but he didn't he lingered some people are happy with God just saving them from the pits just taking care of their needs and they live their life like that but then some seek to walk with God and it is those that seek to walk with God that God shares his plans with he lets you in on it I want you to notice the difference in their prayers in Genesis 18 verse 23

Abraham interceded on behalf of the whole city we talked about that how he prayed for them diligently but in Genesis 19 verse 20 Lot simply pleaded for himself he simply wanted a way out he was simply watching out for him let me escape let my life be saved what are your prayers focused on are they selfish requests are they selfless surrenders what are they because prayer is really a surrender it's nothing less than that it's a surrender one more thing I want you to see and it was their attitudes their attitudes were different Jesus 18

Abraham was praying he's seeing himself as only dust and ashes in verse 27 but in Genesis 19 verse 19 Lot calls himself God's servant but when God told him to flee he said he couldn't call yourself what you want to but unless you're sold out to God you're not his servant and so the question is what are the limitations that we throw before God what are those areas of our life when we don't want him messing with and if there's any of those we always are going to settle for God's second best in our life if we're holding things back for being everything that we can be for the Lord I will tell you that Lot's life is a preponderance of small mistakes along the way it's just a build up of small mistakes as a matter of fact 2 Peter chapter 2 verse 7 and 8 tells us that he was a righteous man that was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men and that he was living day to day with them and it tormented him that's what

Peter tells us about Lot however he chose his course and it started small he just saw good land he just thought he'd take advantage of a deal you go your way and I'll go mine and you pick which way well I'm gonna pick the best you know and his drift into the mess that we see in 19 that I purposely didn't focus on some of it because it's sickening to me honestly that mess that he's in that didn't come overnight just a trickle just a slow drift headed the wrong way pitching your tent in the wrong place watch the drift in Genesis 13 verse 12 he pitches his tent near Sodom in Genesis 14 verse 12 he's living in Sodom in Genesis 19 verse 1 he's sitting at the gateway of Sodom just slowly moving in and destroying everything that he knows it's the antithesis of of Psalm chapter 1 when Psalm chapter 1 says blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked nor stands in the way of sin nor sits in the seat of scoffers but his delight is in the law of the

[32 : 42] Lord and on his law he meditates day and night he's like a tree planted by streams of water that yield its fruit and season and its leaf does not wither and all that he does he prospers was it all on purpose did he mean to live in a condemned city no he simply wanted the best of both worlds that's what he wanted and his sins although they may be little they cost him big and the results was disaster you see Abraham sought the Lord at all cost and Lot some of God at no cost is what he sought it's contrasting conditions God gives us choices and the choice is ours but so are the ramifications may we look at someone else's wayward life and learn from it so we don't do the same in our own life with every head bowed and every eye closed if you're here this morning and you've never surrendered your life to the

Lord Jesus Christ I want you to know he'll save you today he's speaking to your heart's life it's only because he pursues you gives you the opportunity to respond to him in obedience if that's never happened to you there's no need for you to put that off any longer love to guide you in that maybe you're here this morning and and you have done that but the reality is you're a Christian today and like a lot there's some similarities in your life there's just some slipping some stuff that you've handled yourself instead of handling God some ways you've pointed your own direction instead of trusting God and his you need to get that right whether it's publicly or privately you need to get it right whether it's at this altar or at your church you feel like the

Holy Spirit is drawing you into this church you want to join us along for the journey I encourage you if God is leading that come we'll talk about that maybe you're here and you know that you're a Christian but you've never been baptized as a believer it's never happened that's the first step of obedience that'll be a hindrance to you in your spiritual life for the Lord we'd love to guide you in that process no pressure just conversations from guides Lord Jesus thank you for showing us a lot it's ugly I don't like reading it I don't like thinking about it being put in such a situation being in such a city but God I pray today that you'll help us to learn from it and help us to respond in obedience because of it Father I pray in Jesus name Amen