

THE LORD KNOWETH THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS

INTRODUCTION:

Over a month and a half ago, I started a series on “Bible words that we don’t use in our every day speech.” Since that is a bit clunky, I’m going to change the name to “Defining and Understanding Biblical Terms.” So far, we have covered only one—the concept of “righteous” and “righteousness.” In the way of review, here is what we have looked at so far:

1) God’s hatred for **self-righteousness**. The Pharisee in Luke 18 “prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are.” He went on to tell God how good he was; whereas the publican—the tax collector—had the right attitude when he prayed, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Jesus undoubtedly shocked the listeners when He declared the “bad” man—by outward appearances—was considered *right* in God’s sight but the good man was not. Stated another way, the bad man was saved—and the good man was not!

2) Second, we noted that according to Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:20, our “righteousness”—our goodness—needs to exceed that of the Pharisees if we were ever going to be allowed into heaven. But how can you be better than the “best?” You can’t! That’s why we are told not to try to make *ourselves* righteous, but submit ourselves to God’s way of being righteous—that being through Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 5:21 “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

3) In the third sermon, we looked at Jeremiah’s lamentation over the destruction of Jerusalem and noted that God is righteous—He knows right and does right all time—even when (or should I say *especially* when)—He brings trials. When trials come, we need to reflect on our lives. If there is *known* sin; we need to repent. If we are not aware of sin, we need to seek...and trust...and wait. Lamentations 3:26 says “It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.”

4) We then looked at the “crown of righteousness” referred to by Paul in his “farewell address” to Timothy. Was it a literal crown that would be worn in heaven? I won’t be dogmatic, but I tend to think it is reference to the rewards we will receive for our service to God *after* salvation. I *can* be dogmatic about this, though:

- a) whatever it is, it will be good; and
- b) Paul is not the only one who would be getting it because God’s says it would also be given to those who love Jesus’ appearing. Who loves Christ’s appearing? Those who love Him & are obeying Him!

5) And last week we noted in II Corinthians 11 that not only does Satan pretend to be an angel of light, he has servants who masquerade as “ministers of righteousness.” Lucifer was created by God and although a beautiful and important angel, he became proud and was not content with his place. He wanted to be *like* God we are told in Isaiah 14—and God kicked him out of heaven. Satan’s response? Seek to destroy who God loves the most, that being people created in God’s image. How does Satan do that? One way is to deceive people into believing and teaching lies regarding how to have their sins forgiven and go to heaven.

Please turn to II Peter Chapter 2. We looked at verse 1 briefly last week, but I think it is good to be reminded of it again. Pretty strong language, isn’t it? There were false prophets in Peter’s day; there will be false teachers in our day. They will privily (secretly) bring in damnable (destructive) heresies—“even denying the Lord that bought them.” Think about that—there will be teachers who promote a doctrine that says ‘Jesus’ death is not enough to save—you need to add something else to it!’ What a horrible punishment awaits those who teach a **false** way of getting to heaven!

Drop down to verse 6 and follow along as I read through verse 8. This morning we are going to look at the life of Lot and consider this thought: “The Lord knoweth the way of the Righteous.” Stated another way, II Tim 2:19 says “The Lord knoweth them that are His.” God knows who is righteous—and who is not!

1. The declaration of the Lord regarding Lot's righteousness (v 7-8)

Notice again verses 7-8. **Three** times in these two verses we see Peter emphasizing that Lot was righteous. Now if you are paying attention...and looking...and can count up to 3, you should be thinking 'Wait a minute, Pastor—I only see two!' (I won't ask for a show of hands to see who was thinking that way 😊!) In verse 7 it says "just" Lot. The word "just" is translated from the Greek word *dikaios*—the same Greek word translated "righteous"—twice—in verse 8. Why did they translate the same Greek word "just" once—and "righteous"—twice? I have no idea! God, however, wants us to be certain of this—He declared that Lot was *righteous*.

Lot was forgiven in the sight of God and was considered—by God—as a child of God. God delivered him from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and then in verse 9 we see this statement: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the *godly* out of temptations..." Lot, then, was considered by God as righteous and godly. That should come as a surprise to you as we next examine....

2. The description of Lot's life

A. Background of Lot's early life

Please take your Bibles and turn to Genesis 11.

--v 27: Abram, Nahor, and Haran are brothers; Haran has a son named Lot

--v 28: One of the brothers—Haran, Lot's father—dies

Ryrie points out that "Ur of the Chaldees" was a wealthy, populated, and sophisticated pagan worship center located about 220 miles SE of current day Baghdad.

--v 31 Terah—Abram's father—Abram, Sarai, and Lot all left Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan. Two routes: a) one was through the middle of a huge desert (not a good idea with herds of animals); b) the other route was to follow the Euphrates River. They did that and stayed in a city called "Haran"—the same name as Lot's father!

--In Gen 12:1 we see a reference to God's previous instruction to Abram "Now the LORD had said..." (see Acts 7:2-4) being repeated. While in the Ur of the Chaldees Abram was instructed by God to leave there and go to Canaan; while dwelling in the city of Haran, God repeated those instructions with the additional promise that God would make of him a great nation.

--In Gen 12:4-5 we see that Lot goes with Abram and Sarai to the land of Canaan. Why did Abram take Lot? Not told, but it seems that he took on the role of being a father figure to him after Lot's father Haran had died.

--Now look at Gen 12:7 "And the LORD appeared unto Abram..." and "there builded he an altar unto the LORD." In Gen 12:8, we see Abram leaving that place and building another altar unto the LORD "having Bethel on the west and Hai on the east"—in other words, between them.

Were Sarai and Lot physically with Abram when God appeared to him and spoke to him? We aren't told and I would guess there were not. Pretty safe to say, though, that Abram told both Sarai and Lot about these appearances from God. It is also safe to say that they both knew that Abram had built altars to God and it is quite possible that Lot even helped build them.

--In Gen 12:10 we note that a famine comes and they go into Egypt. We know that Lot again went with because Gen 13:1 says Abram, his wife, and Lot all "went up out of Egypt."

--Now look at Gen 13:3. Here we see Abram returning back to where he had been previously—between Bethel and Hai—now verse 4 "unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first, and there Abram called on the name of the LORD."

--One last thing regarding Lot's background: in Gen 13:2 we see that Abram was rich; in Gen 13:6 we see that Lot had a lot 😊—so much so that they had to split up because the land was not able to bear them.

--Now v 12 and 13. "Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom"; "the men of Sodom were wicked..."

We saw the background of Lot's early life, now let's consider the...

B. Behavior of Lot's later life

Two aspects to his behavior; his conduct; the way he lived

i. Questionable behavior

--Notice 14:12 "Lot...who dwelt in Sodom." He went from pitching his tent toward Sodom to living in the city. How wicked was Sodom? Notice Genesis 18, verses 17-21. Sodom was so wicked that God was going to destroy it!

--Now 19:1 "And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot **sat in the gate** of Sodom..." To sit in the gate means that Lot had a place of prominence and respect. Verse 9 suggests that he may even have been a judge. If Lot had a place of respect in a wicked city, I don't think I'm going out on a limb to suggest that Lot was not confronting them about their sin!

--In 19:4-5 we see the blatant wickedness of Sodom. The men of the city—both young and old and from all parts of the city—wanted to have physical relations with the two visitors Lot was housing!

--In verses 6-7, we see Lot addressing the men of the city as "brethren;" in verse 8 we see Lot willing to turn his daughters over to these men to "do to them as is good in your eyes." Was he really willing to do that? How low can you possibly go?

Not everything Lot did was bad, however. There were some things we could commend him for:

ii. Commendable behavior

--In Gen 19:1, we see Lot bowing down to the angels

--In 19:2, he calls himself their servant and wants them to stay with him rather than out in the street.

--In 19:3, we see that he made them a feast

--In 19:8—although it amazes us that he was willing to give up his daughters—it did seem that he was willing to do anything to protect them

--And as we go on in the chapter, we will notice that Lot believed the words of the angels regarding God's intent to destroy the city because of its wickedness

Before we look at the consequences of Lot's unrighteous living, I want to pause here for just a moment. As we consider Lot's background, we see he was significantly influenced by Abram in his earlier years. Abram took him under his wing and I believe cared for him as his own. If Lot didn't help Abram build the altars, he certainly knew of them because he lived with Abram when they were built and was with Abram when he returned to the altar after their trip into Egypt.

Because God declares in II Peter 2 that Lot was righteous—and because no one is **born** righteous or can **become** righteous by their own efforts—there had to be a point in time when Lot put his trust in God for the forgiveness of his sins. We know that happened to Abram; Gen 15:6 says "And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness." Somewhere along the line, Lot did the same thing—and it almost certainly happened before he got to Sodom.

This belief in God is more than just believing in the *existence* of God because the **devil** believes in God—and trembles. We need to agree with God that we are sinners and that there is a punishment for sin and the only way to avoid that punishment is to receive the payment God offers us for sin—His Son, Jesus Christ. Although Lot had a limited understanding of who Christ was and what Christ would do, He did know that he was a sinner in need of forgiveness and only God could offer Him that forgiveness. And so he trusted God and it was counted unto him for righteousness—just like his uncle Abram.

Over time, however, the influence of Abram and God was replaced by the influence of Sodom. One man put it like this—"Lot entered Sodom, then Sodom entered Lot." Lot's *behavior* was such that if the NT did not say he was righteous, we would never guess that he was from what we just read. That's why it is good to remind ourselves that "the Lord knoweth them that are His" because we often times don't!

Lastly, let's consider...**3. The disastrous consequences of Lot's unrighteous living**

A. His sons in law perished (Gen 19:12-15)

--Notice verses 12-13 (read). 'Warn your family, Lot. We will destroy this place.'

--v 14 Lot "spoke unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city."

--The phrase "which married his daughters" is an interesting one. Some commentators suggest that in the original language, it carries the idea that they "were *about to marry* his daughters." It is possible that they weren't married yet—but were going to be married soon—and so he was concerned for them and already considered them as his sons in law based on how binding "engagements" were at that time. I tend to agree with this based on the fact that there is no mention of Lot pleading with his married daughters. It seems strange to me that he would plead with his sons in law to escape, but not plead with and warn his married daughters—only their husbands.

--His plea weren't heeded, though, because "he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law." What does that mean? It is night time, he goes to their home and rouses them out of sleep and says 'Get up, God is going to destroy this city!' They think he is "messing" with them and will laugh at them when they do what he says. Imagine the desperation in Lot's voice: 'Get up, I tell you—it's true! God is going to destroy this city and we must leave now!'

--Regardless of his urgency, they did not believe him and so they stayed—and perished! We see that in verse 16; only Lot, his wife, and his two daughters escape the destruction the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. That is further emphasized in verses 24-25. Notice "all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground."

Sadly, although Lot's wife got out of Sodom, it was not a happy ending for her. In Gen 19:26, we see that...

B. His wife perished (Gen 19:26)

The instructions in Gen 19:17 from the angels given to Lot, his wife, and his daughters as they were leaving the city: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

Now look at verse 26. "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." Lot's wife was following behind him and although she got out of Sodom, Sodom had not gotten out of her and she looked back, I believe out of *longing* and not out of curiosity. The result—she was killed and became a pillar of salt. It is noteworthy that Jesus used Lot's wife as an illustration regarding the importance of being faithful to the Lord and not turning back to the world. In Luke 17:32 we read these three words: "Remember Lot's wife."

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE LIFE OF LOT

There are many; here are several:

1. We can't always tell who the righteous are by the way they live. Based on Lot's actions, it is hard to imagine he was a righteous person and yet that is what God declares him to be. God knows them that are His—we don't!
2. Righteousness—being *right with God* and in the **sight of God**—is not dependent on what we **do**. It is dependent on trusting the forgiveness and mercy of God which He offers us in the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ.
3. God does not judge the righteous with the ungodly. In Gen 19:22 one of the destroying angels said, "Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither."
4. God does judge ungodliness. It may not be as dramatic as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but it is equally devastating. Separated from God...forever...in Hell...tormented in flame with no relief and no chance of escape—is far worse than the physical destruction of your body.
5. There are consequences when God's children live ungodly lives. What will they be? We don't know—and we don't get to pick them. They can vary in size and scope and severity, but in Lot's life we saw that he lost all his physical belongings, as well as spiritual influence in his city, his family, and his wife. What a price!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS:

1. As God looks at people, He sees two kinds—those that are **right** with Him—and those that are not. God declares that Lot was righteous—and it certainly wasn't based on how he lived. Although not recorded in Scripture, there was a point in time when Lot trusted God for the forgiveness of his sins and God forgave him. Are you certain of heaven? You can be—and God wants you to be.

2. Child of God; influence matters, doesn't it? Lot was righteous—but how he lived contradicted what he believed. One man wrote: "Some Christians have too much of the Lord to really enjoy the world, but too much of the world to really enjoy the Lord."