GENESIS

Chapter 19

*Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed*

**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. 2 “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.” 3 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. 4 Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. 5 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.” 6 Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him 7 and said, “No, my friends. Don’t do this wicked thing. 8 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.” 9 “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. 10 But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. 11 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. 12 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, 13 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.” 14 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. 15 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.” 16 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. 17 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!” 18 But Lot said to them, “No, my lords, please! 19 Your servant has found favor in your eyes, and you have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can’t flee to the mountains; this disaster will overtake me, and I’ll die. 20 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.” 21 He said to him, “Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of. 22 But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it.” (That is why the town was called Zoar.) 23 By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. 24 Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the heavens. 25 Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land. 26 But Lot’s wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. 27 Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the Lord. 28 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. 29 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.**

**19:1** *The two angels.* See notes on 16:7; 18:2. (CSB)

The two “men” of 18:22. (TLSB)

 *Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city.* Lot had probably become a member of Sodom’s ruling council, since a city gateway served as the administrative and judicial center where legal matters were discussed and prosecuted (see Ru 4:1–12). (CSB)

Focal point for community activity. (TLSB)

**19:2** MY LORDS – Unlike Abraham, Lot recognized the visitors only as men. (TLSB)

 SPEND THE NIGHT – Lot knew the danger of spending the night in the city. (TLSB)

 *square.* A large open space near the main city gateway (see 2Ch 32:6) where public gatherings were held. Important cities like Jerusalem could have two or more squares (see Ne 8:16). (CSB)

**19:3** *bread without yeast.* So that it could be baked quickly (see 18:6; Ex 12:39). (CSB)

This was bread of the simplest kind. (TLSB)

**19:4–9** See Jdg 19:22–25. (CSB)

**19:5** *have sex with them.* Homosexuality was so characteristic of the men of Sodom (see Jude 7) that it is still often called sodomy. (CSB)

Homosexual lust burned among many of the men of Sodom. Cf Lv. 18:2; Rom. 1:27. (TLSB)

**19:8** NEVER SLEPT WITH MEN – Unmarried, though betrothed to Sodomites (v. 14). (TLSB)

 DO YOU WHAT YOU LIKE WITH THEM – Culture of hospitality made it unthinkable for Lot to abandon his guests. Yet righteous Lot’s proposal was horribly wrong. Perhaps he sought what he regarded as the lesser of two evils (heterosexual rape instead of homosexual rape), but his suggestion was evil nonetheless. (TLSB)

 *under the protection of my roof.* Ancient hospitality obliged a host to protect his guests in every situation. (CSB)

**19:9** *This fellow came here as an alien, and now he wants to play the judge.* Centuries later, Moses was also considered an outsider and accused of setting himself up as a judge (see Ex 2:14; Ac 7:27). (CSB)

Lot was an outsider accused of setting himself up as a judge. Cf 2 Peter 2:7-8. (TLSB)

**19:13** *we are going to destroy this place.* Sodom’s wickedness had made it ripe for destruction (see Isa 3:9; Jer 23:14; La 4:6; Zep 2:8–9; 2Pe 2:6; Jude 7). (CSB)

**19:14** *his sons-in-law thought he was joking.* Lot apparently had lost his power of moral persuasion even among his family members. (CSB)

They did not believe Lot’s warning. Luther: “The nearer the world is to destruction, the smugger it is” (AE 3:268). (TLSB)

**19:16** *hesitated.* Perhaps because of reluctance to leave his material possessions. (CSB)

Lot’s faith weak. He hesitates to leave his possessions. (TLSB)

 *his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters.* The ten righteous people required to save Sodom (see 18:32) had now been reduced to four. (CSB)

 *the Lord was merciful to them.* Deliverance is due to divine mercy, not to human righteousness (cf. Tit 3:5). (CSB)

Lot required special treatment because of his weakness. (TLSB)

Isaiah 42:3, “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice.”

**19:17** FLEE TO THE MOUNTAINS – Higher elevations to the east. (TLSB)

**19:19** CAN’T FLEE TO THE MOUNTAINS – Here again we see how presumptuous a weak faith can be. Instead of recognizing that it was pure grace that had spared his life Lot asked for further concessions. (PBC)

Lot bases his plea on the favor that has been bestowed on him. He reinforces it by a plea of physical inability to reach the mountains. He claims the evil from which God is delivering his will overtake him nevertheless – not a very commendable attitude. (Leupold)

**19:20** A TOWN – Zoar literally means “tiny place”; a small settlement at the southern end of the Salt Sea. Cf v. 22. (TLSB)

 IS VERY SMALL – Lot pleaded that the small city be spared because the evil there was small. (TLSB)

It almost taxes the reader’s patience to bear with this long-winded plea at a moment of such extreme danger. Lot appreciated but little what was being done for him. (Leupold)

**19:21** GRANT THIS REQUEST – Literally, “lift up your face”; to cheer him with kindness. Luther: “Here one can see how great the power of prayer is, insomuch as Lot rejects that last command – about ascending this hills – when he pleads his exigency (urgency)…To be sure, God gives all things out of free mercy; yet He wants to be entreated” (AE 3:287). (TLSB)

**19:1–22** Lot and his small family are spared the destruction of Sodom, but the deliverance clearly is due to divine mercy and not human righteousness, as Lot’s behavior shows. Just as Lot’s rescue makes sense only when contrasted with Sodom’s destruction, so also our salvation by Christ’s death makes sense only when contrasted with the threats of God’s Law. • Lord God, thank You for Your long-suffering when we, like Lot, are weak in faith. Amen. (TLSB)

**19:24** THE LORD - The Son of God, who spoke with Abraham (18:22-23), rained down from His heavenly Father, the First Person of the Godhead. Ambrose: “The Lord rains down from the Lord; the Lord grants mercy from the Lord. The Lord is neither divided when He rains from the Lord, nor is there a separation when He grants mercy from the Lord, but in each case the oneness of the Lordship is expressed. (NPNF2). Chemnitz: “Wherever you in Scripture that God is speaking about God as a person about a person, there you are safe in affirming that the three persons of the Diety are indicated” (LTh 1:67). (TLSB)

 *rained down burning sulfur.* Perhaps from a violent earthquake spewing up asphalt, such as is still found in this region. (CSB)

Perhaps burning brimstone or pitch falling from the sky, lightning igniting coal-enriched soil, or a volcanic eruption. (TLSB)

 SODOM AND GOMORRAH – God also destroyed Admah and Zeboiim, other cities from the region. (TLSB)

Although only Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned, we learn from Deut 29:23; cf. Hos. 11:8, that Admah and Zebeiim were involved as well. By adding Zoar to the group we have the so-called Five Cities, i.e., Pentapolis; cf. 14:2, 9. Of course Zoar was spared. (Leupold)

**19:25** OVERTHREW – Literally, “turned over,” as with a griddle cake. Perhaps as an earthquake was also involved. (TLSB)

Whatever means God used, the fact remains that this was a miracle of divine judgment. When the first two atomic bombs fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there were survivors. When Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed there were no survivors, except for the four members of Lot’s family. (PBC)

**19:26** *Lot’s wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.* Her disobedient hesitation (see v. 17) became proverbial in later generations (see Lk 17:32). Even today, grotesque salt formations near the southern end of the Dead Sea are reminders of her folly. (CSB)

Reluctant to leave, falling behind, and disobeying clear instructions, Lot’s wife was engulfed by the devastation. Clement of Rome (1st Epistle): “Those who are of a double mind, and who distrust the power of God bring down judgment on themselves.

**19:27** Abraham went to see whether Lots’ household had perished. (TLSB)

**19:29** *God … remembered Abraham.* See note on 8:1. (CSB)

Hebrew is zakar. It means “to recall” or “keep in mind.” God could not forget His covenant with His people. When He “remembers” them, He actively works to keep His promise to protect and save them. (TLSB p. 843)

 *he brought Lot out of the catastrophe.* Lot’s deliverance was the main concern of Abraham’s prayer (18:23–32), which God now answered. (CSB)

**19:23–29** God grants Abraham’s prayer by preserving the lives of Lot and his daughters. In the destruction of Sodom and the neighboring cities, we see that wicked behavior on earth cries out to God for judgment. This judgment sometimes comes by catastrophic events. But just as clearly, we see God’s patient love for His children on earth, even when their response to His grace is weak and pitiful, as in the case of Lot and his family. • Heavenly Father, thank You for Your patience. Deliver us from evil, for Jesus’ sake. Amen. (TLSB)

*Lot and His Daughters*

**30 Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. He and his two daughters lived in a cave. 31 One day the older daughter said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is no man around here to lie with us, as is the custom all over the earth. 32 Let’s get our father to drink wine and then lie with him and preserve our family line through our father.” 33 That night they got their father to drink wine, and the older daughter went in and lay with him. He was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up. 34 The next day the older daughter said to the younger, “Last night I lay with my father. Let’s get him to drink wine again tonight, and you go in and lie with him so we can preserve our family line through our father.” 35 So they got their father to drink wine that night also, and the younger daughter went and lay with him. Again he was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up. 36 So both of Lot’s daughters became pregnant by their father. 37 The older daughter had a son, and she named him Moab; he is the father of the Moabites of today. 38 The younger daughter also had a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the Ammonites of today**.

**19:30** AlthoughGod had granted Zoar as an asylum, Lot went to the hills that originally were to be his destination. (TLSB)

**19:31** NO MAN AROUND – In their little world of fear, the daughters became convinced that prospects and childbearing no longer existed. (TLSB)

**19:32** WINE – The family had spent sufficient time in Zoar to hater provisions for a long stay in the cave. (TLSB)

 PRESERVE OUR FAMILY LINE – Caught up in their fear, they felt compelled to preserve what remained of their family line. Their scheme pf incest is one fitting for the depraved Sodomites, who clearly influenced them. (TLSB)

**19:33** *they got their father to drink wine, and the older daughter went in and lay with him.* Though Lot’s role was somewhat passive, he bore the basic responsibility for the drunkenness and incest that eventually resulted in his two daughters’ becoming pregnant by him (see v. 36). (CSB)

Lot’s role, though inexcusable, was passive, carried out in a drunken stupor. See Noah’s sin and its consequences, 9:20–27. (TLSB)

**19:36–38** The sons born to Lot’s daughters were the ancestors of the Moabites and Ammonites (see Dt 2:9, 19), two nations that were to become bitter enemies of Abraham’s descendants (see, e.g., 1Sa 14:47; 2Ch 20:1). (CSB)

Lot’s daughters felt no shame. They gave names to their sons that would memorialize their conception. (TLSB)

19:37 The Lord later ordered the Israelites not to touch Moabite territory because of their descent from Lot (Deut. 23:3-5).

**19:30–38** Lot and his daughters, driven by weakness and fear, resort to evil means to preserve the family line. They demonstrate no regret, as if the end justifies the means. And still God is patient, even granting protection to their offspring. Weak Christians often resort to an “end justifies the means” solution when they feel they must take matters into their own hands, disregarding God’s clear will. God calls us to repent of this. In His grace, through the perfect life, death, and resurrection of His Son, God has provided us with the means to the best of ends: eternal life and blessedness. • “Remove the pow’r of sin from me And cleanse all my impurity That I may have the strength and will Temptations of the flesh to still.” Amen. (*LSB* 704:2) (TLSB)