

# Genesis 18-19 - Disparate Destinies

## I. Introduction

### A. This morning we are in the second week of a two week section on the story of Lot

1. Last week we covered Genesis 13-14 and considered the difference between Lot and Abraham's desires and how that calls us to consider our desires and battle worldly desires with a greater desire for Christ
2. So last week I titled the message 'Dueling Desires' - the desire for Christ and the promise is set over against desire for the world and for the things of the world - this week I'm titling the message 'Disparate Destinies'
3. This morning we're going to see what the ultimate end of sinners is and consider that the ultimate end of sinners and the ultimate end of the righteous is different
4. But, if the ultimate end of the righteous and sinners are different, can their paths in this world be the same? We're going to consider Lot's story within the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah to answer this question and warn ourselves of the dangers of partnering with sinners

### B. Read Genesis 18:16-21, 19:1-38

### C. Proposition and Outline

1. Proposition: The righteous and the wicked have different ends and therefore they must have different lives.
2. Outline: We will begin and end with statements about God. In between these two anchors we'll consider four warnings for us.

## II. God's judgment against sin is ripe

### A. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah stands in Scripture as a witness that God's judgment is imminent

1. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is referenced 27 times in the Old and New Testaments
2. Each of these references is a warning that another judgment like this is going to occur
3. So the first thing we should see is a warning that God's judgment against sin is ripe and is ready to fall

### B. God testifies that He is ready to judge

Genesis 18:20-21 - *Then the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know."*

1. The story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is introduced by God telling His plan to Abraham
2. As God speaks to Abraham, the implication is that He sees and hears sin, that He knows all of the sin that happens and that He is ready to judge that sin - sin cries out to God for judgment
3. Ephesians 5:6 - *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.* - Colossians 3:6 - *On account of these the wrath of God is coming.*
4. God's testimony in all of Scripture is that sin will be dealt with, He will come and judge and destroy rebels

### C. Wicked men testify that they are ready to be judged

Genesis 19:4-9 - *But before they lay 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 you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have 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 have come under the shelter of my roof." But they said, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door down.*

1. God is not the only testimony to the necessity of judgment, wicked men testify to their own judgment
  - a. The men of Sodom and Gomorrah amply demonstrate the reason for God's judgment against them
  - b. When God's servants come to the city, the men show that they are insatiable for sin, that nothing will turn them away from their wickedness and they are ready to be judged
2. What was the sin of Sodom? As I've considered the passage, I'm not sure this is the right question to ask
  - a. In reality, the answer doesn't matter, the point is that they are exceedingly sinful
    - i. Isaiah 3:9 - *For the look on their faces bears witness against them; they proclaim their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves.*
    - ii. Ezekiel 16:49 - *Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.*
    - iii. Jude 7 - *just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.*
  - b. This is not a warning against a specific sin, but a warning against all sin. The men of Sodom were vile and wicked and testified to their imminent destruction - the wickedness of sin calls out for its own destruction

#### **D. God's judgment will be sudden and terrible**

Genesis 19:23-25 - *The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar. 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 cities, and what grew on the ground.*

1. The center point of the Sodom and Gomorrah story is their total destruction by God
  - a. Having affirmed that He is a God who will punish sin and the residents of the cities having demonstrated that God's judgment is just, God's judgment falls without delay
  - b. And God's judgment, like the flood, is total and terrible - God's wrath against sin will exhaust itself
2. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah ought to be a warning to us of God's impending judgment
  - a. Luke 17:28-30 - *Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot---they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all--- so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.*
  - b. As God's judgment fell without warning, so God's judgment is again ready to fall without warning
  - c. And as God's judgment totally destroyed the dwelling of the wicked, so God's judgment will totally destroy this wicked world and the sinners therein

#### **E. This enduring testimony sets us up to listen to the following warnings well**

Genesis 18:19 - *For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."*

1. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah does not stand in Scripture merely to testify to God's impending judgment against sin - it is meant to warn all men to turn away from sin
  - a. The passage is specifically a warning to the promised line of what will happen if they join sinners in their wickedness - God displayed the destruction to Abraham to serve as a teaching point
2. God tells Abraham about the impending destruction so that he will instruct his children about the righteousness of God and the danger of joining with the wicked - there is a lesson and warning to us in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and it is rooted in the fact that God stands ready to judge sin

### III. What is 'Partnering with Sinners'?

#### A. To define partnering with sinners, I took two different tracks to help me think it through

1. First, I tried to think about what Lot did
  - a. Lot is our negative example of the righteous one who partnered with the world
  - b. So we should learn from his life what partnering with the world means
2. Second, I tried to look in the rest of the Bible to how people partnered with others
  - a. I looked primarily for warnings in the New Testament against partnership
  - b. But I also scanned the Old Testament and gleaned some perspective from that as well
3. Through this study, I've decided that it means at least three things
  - a. Honestly, it is very challenging to define this, because it is really easy to say too little or too much
  - b. Hopefully my analysis here is helpful but think about it yourself too to see what ways you might partner with sinners

#### B. Partnering with sinners can mean participating in their sin

1. This is probably the clearest and easiest to define way of partnering with sinners
  - a. Ephesians 5:5-7 - *For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.*
  - b. I Peter 4:3-4 - *For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;*
2. When I warn against partnering with sinners, I most definitely mean that we cannot participate in the sins that they so wholeheartedly give themselves over to
  - a. And lest we think that these sins are things that we would never participate in, just consider that Paul lists greed, or desiring things in this world, as one of these sins in Ephesians 5
  - b. But, also I don't think this is the end of what partnering with sinners means, because as I think through Peter's assessment of Lot, Peter says that Lot wasn't partnering with them in sin, instead '*he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard.*'
  - c. As we consider Lot, there must be more to partnering with sinners than directly participating in sin

#### C. Partnering with sinners can mean sharing their identity

1. I take this meaning from the life of Lot
  - a. Lot's story is a story of someone who became more and more identified with the sinners around him
  - b. He first lived by Sodom, then he lived in Sodom, then he became a leading man of Sodom
  - c. He had taken his identity from the world, he had left his identity as a member of the chosen race when he left Abraham and instead of testifying to that identity he took identity from those around him - he took his meaning of life, his goals, his desires, his aims from those around him
2. But I also see this aspect of partnership in the rest of the Bible
  - a. Zechariah 2:11 - *And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.*
  - b. People are going to join themselves to the Lord, to take the identity of Him and His people - that is a positive aspect of partnering
  - c. But, the negative aspect is true as well - we can share identity with the world instead
  - d. In fact, this is also another sense of Ephesians 5:7 - when Paul says don't partner with them, he's repeating a phrase he already used in Ephesians 3:6 - *This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.*
  - e. Paul says we have partnered in the promises of Christ, so we can't partner with the world
  - f. Our identity is now in Christ so our identity can no longer be in the world

#### **D. Partnering with sinners can mean linking arms with them to pursue a common goal**

1. I also think Lot fell into this category
  - a. Lot sought to enjoy the things of this world and the people of Sodom wanted that too
  - b. Lot wasn't trying to join them in sin, but he did decide to join them in order to pursue a common goal
  - c. He was conned into thinking that we share any common goals with those in the world
2. We are clearly warned against this in the New Testament as well
  - a. II Corinthians 6:14-16 - *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God;*
  - b. We can't yoke ourselves with unbelievers because we don't have anything in common with them
3. This is the one that is the hardest to define, because it is easy to say too much or too little
  - a. I don't want to make it sound as though we can't do anything with unbelievers - I'm not calling us to monasticism or to be Amish - often we will have to do things for unbelievers, sometimes we'll even have to work for unbelievers and this isn't necessarily partnering with them
  - b. For example, Paul and Peter told slaves to work for even unbelieving masters over and over and didn't say that this was partnership
  - c. But we do need to consider the two halves - are we merely doing something with them or are we linking arms with them? It's a fine line between them but it has to do with examining our desires and aims closely and how we are working with or even for unbelievers
  - d. And are we pursuing a common aim with them? When we work with or even for unbelievers are we doing it for the same reasons they are? If we are, we are in dangerous territory
4. For example, I've tried to think through my own employment in light of what I'm going to teach this morning - am I partnering with unbelievers? And I think it is a valid question to ask
  - a. But as I've thought it through, I'm not sharing any of their goals - my only goal is to provide for my family while their goals all center around making a name for themselves. If I would share their goal then my job would be very dangerous for me.
  - b. Also, I don't think I'm linking arms with them because I try to do what is expected of me and even do it well as a testimony of Christ, but I don't seek to partner with them in it - I view myself as an employee not a partner in the work - and I think that's a difference
  - c. I give the example only to show that this sphere of partnering with unbelievers takes careful personal thought and I can't always tell you specifically when you are doing it - but you need to guard yourself against it which means you need to think about it

#### IV. Partnering with sinners may dull the righteous' conscience

##### A. Lot has a low view of righteousness (19:6-8)

*Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have 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 have come under the shelter of my roof."*

1. Lot's attempt to be righteous is horrifying - we cringe at Lot's speech to the men of Sodom that night
  - a. The funny thing is that the men of Sodom realize that Lot is being more righteous than them, that he has become their judge - so Lot's actions here are righteous in some sort of way
  - b. But his attempts to be righteous are horrifying - these deeds aren't righteous in any absolute sense - his deeds only appear righteous to the men of Sodom because they are less evil than their deeds
2. So, my conclusion is that Lot was primarily more righteous than his neighbors
  - a. Lot having joined himself to the wicked and partnering with them has lost his ability to distinguish right from wrong well - his conscience became dull - he took the world's standards, not God's

##### B. Lot has a low view of judgment

*Genesis 19:18-20 - And Lot said to them, "Oh, no, my lords. Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life. But I cannot escape to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I die. Behold, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there---is it not a little one?---and my life will be saved!"*

1. Lot's flight from God's wrath is only half-hearted - he doesn't think he can run that far
2. Instead of saying 'Yes!' and fleeing as fast as he could, he tries to run a little slower and less far
3. He didn't fear God's wrath appropriately

##### C. In the same way, when we partner with sinners, when we join them in their sin, we dull our own consciences

1. I Corinthians 15:33-34 - *Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.*
2. Paul, looking at all of the problems in the Corinthian church tells them that partnering with sinners, joining them in their sin, has put them into a drunken stupor - they are unable to tell right from wrong anymore
3. Joining sinners leads us to a point where we can no longer tell right from wrong and where we no longer fear God as we ought to - 'Bad company ruins good morals' - we take the world's standards not God's

#### V. Partnering with sinners may endanger the righteous' life

*Genesis 19:15 - As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city."*

##### A. In the story, Lot finds himself in grave danger in Sodom as it is about to be destroyed by God

1. The angels tell him specifically that he is in danger of being destroyed along with the city
2. This is a direct result of Lot partnering with sinners - as Lot gets closer and closer to sinners, he becomes identified with them and therefore subject to their judgment

##### B. So, when I say partnering with sinners endangers the righteous' life, I don't mean merely physical life

1. In the story of Lot, his physical life is endangered by his partnership with sinners, and that could happen to those who chose to partner with sinners - but the graver danger is what Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction is symbolic of - the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah symbolizes eternal destruction
2. Sodom and Gomorrah are pictures of what will happen eternally to the wicked - Jude 7 - *just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.*
3. Partnering with sinners can endanger our eternal destiny - if the wicked and the righteous have different destinies, they must be on different paths - if you're on the same path you may share the same destiny

##### C. The danger associated with partnership is highlighted for us in Ephesians 5:5-7 - *For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.*

1. Paul tells the Ephesians that God is going to judge sinners - don't be deceived!
2. Then he says if God is going to judge sinners we shouldn't be partnering with them
3. We don't want to be caught walking in the way of sinners when God's judgment falls

## VI. Partnering with sinners may destroy the righteous' witness

### A. With this warning I'm thinking of two episodes - Lot warning his sons-in-law in verse 14 and the story of Lot and his daughters at the end of the chapter

1. In both of these episodes, Lot's witness has been destroyed
2. Having participated with the sinners in Sodom, Lot's sons-in-law don't listen to his testimony anymore when he warns them of impending judgment
3. And having participated with the sinners in Sodom to the point of offering them his daughters as a 'righteous act', Lot's witness had been destroyed with his daughters who decide not to honor their father
4. And having participated with sinners, Lot's testimony has been destroyed throughout all ages, being remembered as the one who was almost destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah and then committed incest with his daughters afterwards

### B. The way Lot story ends - he's not heard from again after his incest with his daughters - calls us to reflect upon the fact that Lot may have been saved from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but his actions still had consequences - he had lost his witness in the world

1. So, the New Testament warns us not to participate with sinners so that we may be a testimony to them
2. I Peter 2:11-12 - *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*
3. When we partner with sinners we lose the right to testify to them of the righteousness of God and His coming judgment, so we must be careful not to do so that we will be a testimony to sinners

## VII. Partnering with sinners may disprove the righteous' faith

Genesis 19:26 - *But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.*

### A. Lot's wife is a curious case because she is only mentioned in the story of Lot to tell us that she looked back

1. But she is specifically mentioned in the New Testament as a warning to us
2. Luke 17:28-32 - *Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot---they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all--- so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot's wife.*

### B. How is Lot's wife a warning to us? She is one who turned back

1. Lot's wife was one who looked as though she was being saved - she was part of Abraham's entourage, she was a member of Lot's family, she was even taken out of the city of Sodom
2. But, in the end, Lot's wife cared more for the things of the world than the judgment of God - she cared so much for the things of the world that in the end she couldn't leave the things of the world
3. Having partnered with the world she couldn't extricate herself from the world - she proved that she really didn't believe God's word she was too attached to sinners' lifestyles

### C. So the New Testament warns of us Lot's wife to warn us of the danger of partnering with sinners

1. When we partner with sinners, we may find out that we really love sinners and their joys and pleasures more than we love Christ, we may find out that when judgment comes we can't escape because we have rooted ourselves in with sinners and found our identity with them
2. When we partner with sinners, we tempt the warnings of passages like Hebrews 6:4-8 - *For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.*
3. Obviously this is very similar to endangering the righteous' life, but I think there is a subtle difference
  - a. Lot's life had been endangered, but he escaped in the end - his partnership with the world nearly destroyed him but by the grace of God he was pulled out of the city
  - b. But Lot's wife, in the end, proved that she loved the things of the world more than the things of God, her partnership with sinners ended up proving that she never really wanted the things of God

## VIII. God's mercy is as awe-inspiring as His judgment

### A. God saves Lot when he doesn't deserve it

Genesis 19:15-16, 29 - *As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "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. 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... So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.*

1. After Lot has done all this, God still chooses to save Lot
2. Lot has desired the things of the world, he's partnered with sinners to get the things of the world, he's lost his witness with the world and lost his ability to determine right from wrong, he even lingers instead of fleeing the city - but God is merciful to him and takes him out of the overthrow
3. The story of Lot, in the end, highlights how great God's mercy is - Sodom and Gomorrah may testify to how great God's wrath is, but the more amazing thing is how great God's mercy is toward Lot
4. Lot wasn't saved because of anything he did, but because of what God did

### B. God calls Lot righteous even after all this

II Peter 2:7-8 - *and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard);*

1. Again, after doing all this, God calls Lot righteous in the end assessment
2. Lot, even after being drug out of Sodom has failed to rightly fear God's judgment (Zoar), then gotten drunk and committed incest with his daughters - but God still calls him righteous
3. Again, the story of Lot highlights how great God's mercy is, and it teaches us that our righteous standing before God cannot ultimately be based on us - otherwise there would be no way to call Lot righteous in the end, Lot did crazy unrighteous things
4. But somehow God is able to call Lot righteous in His inspired word reflecting on these things

### C. My conclusion: salvation is all of grace

1. II Timothy 1:9 - *[God] saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,*
2. Lot reminds us that salvation isn't about anything we could do to be saved, Lot is saved because God chose to save him, in the end that's it
3. God can save whoever He wants to - He can save people whom He has granted to live godly lives for years in this world and He can save people whom He saves, as it were, by the skin of their teeth - and both of them testify that salvation is all of grace
4. Lot is a subtle warning to us who are trying to live righteous lives in Christ never to suppose that we are better than others or more worthy of being saved because of our own righteousness

### D. But, at the same time, I can say that this isn't what he should aim at

1. We need to be reminded that our righteousness isn't what saves us, but when I say that, I don't mean to encourage anyone to live unrighteous lives hoping that God shows grace to them in the end like He did to Lot - Lot shows us that God can but Lot doesn't promise that God will
2. In fact, in the New Testament we aren't ever commanded to reflect on Lot's life but we are called to reflect on someone in the passage - Luke 17:32 - *Remember Lot's wife.*
3. The New Testament holds Lot up as someone God showed immense mercy to, highlighting how great God's mercy is, but the New Testament doesn't call us to try to emulate Lot, instead it warns us about Lot's wife
4. Those who get in bed with the world, who partner with sinners may be saved in the end because of God's mercy, but they may be destroyed in the end - Lot's wife shows us that
5. So let's rejoice in God's great mercy to Lot and reflect on our own lives to see how God has shown that same mercy to us and guard ourselves against any pride we might have in our own righteousness
6. But let's not imitate Lot, instead let us learn these lessons from Lot's life and run from partnering with sinners seeing how dangerous that can be