

**JUSTICE ROLLS DOWN****Genesis 19:1-29**

**INTRO:** I've referred from time to time to a neighbor we once had who had the well-developed gift of angering every single one of his neighbors. He seemed to relish little guerilla raids of varying levels of annoyance that caused those living around him to hate him with varying levels of intensity. And while you might think the word "HATE" is too strong, let me assure you it was hate. I'll not share at this point about what he did to promote such passion – I've done that before. But I will share what one of his victims said to me after one of our annoying neighbor's latest shenanigans – this one directed at me. This man, his name is Kurt, who had been cheated out of a significant sum of money by the man, sat on his haunches, smoking a cigarette, and gazing off into the distance, said, *"What goes around, comes around, Keith. What goes around, comes around."* For our neighbor who was so annoying, actually became a Christ Follower and mended his troublesome ways before it really came around for him.

Moses told the Children of Israel that if they didn't obey God, and carry out his plan, *"But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the Lord; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out."* Numbers 32:23. That is very similar to, "What goes around, comes around." The point is sin WILL find you out.

Two weeks when I preached on the last half of Genesis 18 I referred to Romans 6:23 which begins with *For the wages of sin is death.* And that would be depressing except that Paul finishes the verse with . . . *but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* THAT, is the promise! The gift of God comes from turning our backs on sin and walking in repentance with Jesus as our Lord.

Well this week, we are looking at Genesis 19 and it is decidedly around the wages of unrepented sin. It is death and destruction. It is what happens when God is ignored and his righteous wrath and justice comes rolling down. It's not a happy message, and I hate to preach it, but it's truth and the world needs to hear it, because it's not God's preferred outcome. Let's read the passage and see what I mean.

**(Read Genesis 19:1-29 – not on the wall – too long)**

WHEW!

I'm going to take this passage section by section and talk about it and we will see God's justice AND his mercy.

**Hospitality isn't only a Godly trait, it's a family trait**

- Abraham's nephew Lot lives in Sodom and when he sees the men, who we now know to be angels approaching, he runs to welcome them and offer them hospitality as his uncle did.
- We already know that the population of this plain, mostly the inhabitants of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, were notoriously sinful. This was the very reason the Lord and his angels were passing through. So, knowing this, is another reason Lot was so hospitable – with the evil he knew abounded, he feared for the safety of these travelers.
- Hospitality is a nice thing, and often it's a necessary thing. As we will see later, Lot exhibits the effects of the sinful environment in which he lives, but not so much so that he could not see the need for a safe haven for these two men. And much like is today we see that even though . . .

**Responsibility is a vanishing virtue**

- Lot knew he needed to take responsibility and insist on their staying in his home even when they made like they would rather sleep in the city square. Lot could have responded to their insane suggestion with "Okay, suit yourselves! Sleep in the square if you like." and washed his hands of the situation. In a sea of sin, Lot was an island of decency and he took responsibility and insisted they come to his home.
- Responsibility is in waning supply in our day too. People are driving toward destruction in a variety of ways, and all too often the response from decent people, and especially the people of, is to not get involved. If that's what they want, go ahead. See if I care. Well Jesus does and that's why he died. And we are his messengers to a world careening toward hell – it's our responsibility to speak up for him. Don't let the world sleep in the square ABC.
- The danger is real, and you can see it in . . .

**The Sin of Sodom**

- Listen again to the hellish words of the men of Sodom who surged up to Lot's house. *"Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them."* Genesis 19:4-5. This

audacious and vicious threat of homosexual gang rape is the very reason that for centuries homosexual sex and the horrific way it is administered even to women, is where the term sodomy came from in reference to the law. And indeed, until just a few decades ago, sodomy was against the law. So, no matter how misguided preachers try to spin this and other scriptures that clearly speak strongly against the practice of homosexual sex, into some other sin, one of the most obvious sins of Sodom is homosexuality. BUT, it was not the only sin. Homosexuality is only one sin of many that grieves the heart of God

- In the opening of Isaiah God calls out to Judah and Jerusalem with *Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah! The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?*” says the Lord. *I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.* Isaiah 1:10-11. And a few verses later he reveals a particular sin of Sodom and Gomorrah. *Your hands are full of blood! Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.* Isaiah 1:15b-17. It was injustice. It was being so wrapped up in self that the poor, the widows, and the orphans are completely forgotten.
- Ezekiel, gives another hint to the catalog of sins Sodom was guilty of and its similar to Isaiah’s. Listen, *Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen.* Ezekiel 16:49-50. Like Isaiah it is injustice and also, in the words of one commentator, the sin of “pride and prosperous ease”. These were rich and beautiful cities, even described like the Garden of Eden, and in their prosperity they forgot the poor and grew fat on their riches. They were haughty and did detestable things.
- And Jeremiah adds this to the list, *And among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen something horrible: They commit adultery and live a lie. They strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that not one of them turns from their wickedness. They are all like Sodom to me; the people of Jerusalem are like Gomorrah.* Jeremiah 23:14. Notice that it’s the prophets who are supposed to be representing God who are helping to promulgate the sin and the sin is adultery and lying.
- And of course, these are just a few examples. Commentator Clyde Francisco writes, *“In all probability the categories of sin in Sodom were so varied that each prophet could select one to illustrate his oracle without exhausting the other possibilities.”* Obviously sin was rampant.
- And Paul’s litany of sin in Romans 1 is also in no way exhaustive. He writes, *They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy.* Romans 1:29-31. Notice how he comes up for air in the middle of the list with **THEY INVENT WAYS OF DOING EVIL**. This is familiar, isn’t? This is our society too. Our modern culture is a modern Sodom and Gomorrah where lost people pound at the door of decency and invent ways of doing evil. In other words the sin of Sodom was horrendous and it continues today. Justice will roll down.
- And living in that culture takes a toll because we can see that . . .

**Lot is a sad picture of a man who sought to gain his life, but lost it**

- Lot may have survived the destruction of the cities but, in many ways he lost everything. As you finish out chapter 19 you see the incredible and sick dysfunction of Lot’s family came home to roost with drunkenness, incest, and complete loss of respect and place. It was a total and complete breakdown of the family.
- You can see this in the incredibly awful way Lot offers his virgin daughters to the raging crowd outside his home. They want his houseguests for sex, why not some young and tender girls instead. After all, women are expendable, don’t make me inhospitable.” This is a very sad commentary on the standing of women in the Old Testament culture and Lot was steeped in it.
- It’s proof that when so called believers live in conformity to this corrupt world, tragic consequences are the natural by-product. Lot is an example and it still happens today. Christians that that dance around the rim of sin sooner or later slip into it. Are you dancing?

- After Lot's terrible solution to the mob is rejected, they come unhinged and the threats and invective ramp up. This shows the looming justice of righteous God is . . .

### **The result of unrepeated sin**

- In our talk two weeks ago we saw Abraham courageously going to bat for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and securing from the Lord a promise that there are only 10 righteous people there that God would preserve them. And we do see here that God does keep his promises. There were not 10 righteous people, but there were four people in Lot's family who would escape the justice that would fall with such horrendous power on Sodom and Gomorrah. God's mercy is intact in life of one imperfect family.
- So Lot and his family are preserved, but the crowd's sinful screams reach a crescendo as they cry out for the guests to be sent out to them. They have no intention of anything but evil. Repentance does not seem to be any part of their mental inventory. It is the recipe for God's justice to be meted out. That recipe is the total lack of repentance from sin. It is the rejection of the goodness of God.
- And Lot's sons in law, who could have escaped with Lot and the rest of the family, laughed when Lot warned them of impending doom. The young men "thought he was joking." This reveals a truth that all of us need to absorb – the wages of sin is no joking matter. Paul tells us the wages of sin is death. People are dying without Jesus. They are locked into sin. The Bible is clear about the eternal destination of those who reject God – and the fire and brimstone of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah presents a good picture of it. People need the Lord before the justice of the Lord rolls down.

**Conclusion:** I need to wrap this up.

This has been an intense message. It's not had any funny stories to set it up because sin and its aftermath are not laughing matters. It's been awful for me to write it. I don't like it. But it's truth, and sometime truth hurts and sometimes, as in this case, truth is deadly. Here is what we need to do:

Run for your life from sin. But take everyone you can with you. Lot had been influenced and negatively affected by the hideous sin around him, but he still knew enough to offer shelter to his guests and try to get his sons in law to escape with him. You know who needs freedom from the sin of this world. Do all you can to come into shelter and then run for the hills.

Know that God is merciful. As I reminded us two weeks ago, God, in his love and mercy *is not willing that any should perish*. 2 Peter 3:9. Come to this same merciful God, repent of your sin, and bring others to do the same. And know that the wrath of God is awesome and awful. God is merciful and loving, but he is also just and the judgment of these cities in Genesis 19 are just an example of the ending in store for those who choose to reject that mercy and love. And don't you for one second think that God sends people to destruction, people who reject God, go willingly to hell of their own accord. This is what happens when justice rolls down. It's not a pretty ending to a tough message, but its truth. Amen.