

In this passage we see that God does indeed judge sin but we also see the importance of intercessory prayer and the presence of the righteous even in an evil environment. Even though America seems to be turning against God and His people, it is still important that we live righteously in front of our neighbors and pray for them for we may be the only thing standing between them and destruction.

Genesis 18:1-19: The LORD appears to Abraham in the form of a man, accompanied by two other men who are apparently angels. Abraham shows them the hospitality common in that day and feeds them but he likely does not yet realize Who he is entertaining. It is only when the LORD starts talking about Sarah having a son in nine months that Abraham realizes Who is visiting him. As the men start to leave, the LORD reveals to Abraham what He is about to do.

Genesis 18

²⁰ And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; ²¹ I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

“And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great...” - The Hebrew word for “cry” can refer to a cry of distress or for justice. Whether those being victimized in Sodom and Gomorrah were crying out to the LORD or merely crying out in their pain, the LORD heard their cries and saw the grievousness of the sin of the two cities. Although Sodom and Gomorrah are known for the rampant homosexuality, that is apparently not the only sin that earned the wrath of God.

“I will go down now, and see...” - The LORD says He wants to determine if the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is as bad as He’s heard, but actually He already knew the extent of their sin and whether or not He would have to destroy the twin cities. Scripture often uses anthropomorphic terminology to describe the LORD and His actions in order to help us understand Him. The LORD is likely giving Abraham a chance to intercede for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

²² And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

Two of the men (who are actually angels) turn away and resume their journey to Sodom, while the third (the LORD) waits as He gives Abraham a chance to speak. The fact that it says they are heading to Sodom and not Gomorrah or to Sodom and Gomorrah probably indicates that they are going to the city where Lot lives in order to preserve him and his family.

²³ And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

Abraham begins his intercession by asking if the LORD if He is willing for the righteous to die as collateral damage while He is destroying the wicked. This question is the basis of Abraham’s intercession for the city of Sodom over the next several verses and raises an interesting question. Will the presence of righteous people prevent or delay the judgment of God? The answer is most likely “it depends.” In this case, there were not enough righteous to spare Sodom but the LORD did move the righteous out of harm’s way before judgment fell (**Gen. 19:22a** [the angel warning Lot of the imminent destruction of the city] “*Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither*”).

²⁴ Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? ²⁵ That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? ²⁶ And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

Using a hypothetical fifty righteous people, Abraham asks the LORD if that would be enough to cause the LORD to spare the city since it would be uncharacteristic for the LORD to destroy the righteous along with the wicked. To do so would be to treat the righteous the same as the wicked. Since the job of a judge is to rescue the righteous by punishing the wicked, shouldn’t the LORD, who is the Judge of all the earth, do what is right and not destroy the righteous? The LORD agrees to not destroy Sodom if there are fifty righteous people within the city.

Verses 27-33: Abraham continues to haggle with the LORD on how many righteous people would it take to make the city worth saving. He finally works his way down to ten and then stops. Apparently Abraham believed that there had to be at least ten righteous people in Sodom and therefore there was no need to negotiate a smaller number. Abraham returns to his tent and the LORD goes His way.

Genesis 19

¹ And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing *them* rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;

“And there came two angels to Sodom at even” – These are presumably the two “men” who accompanied the LORD when He was visiting Abraham in the previous chapter. They had proceeded on to Sodom while the LORD and Abraham were still talking (Gen. 18:22) and arrived as the sun was starting to set.

“and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom” – Lot was not sitting in the gate of the city because he had found a comfortable place to sit and relax. The city gates were where people would come to have their affairs settled and so Lot was serving in the role of a judge (v. 9).

“and Lot seeing *them* rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground” - Hospitality was very important in this culture and so when Lot sees these men entering the city so late in the day he immediately goes to them to make sure they have a place to spend the night. He probably does not realize that these men are angels until later.

² And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. ³ And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

“And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house...” - Lot invites the men to spend the night at his house, after which they can go their way with no further hindrances. Lot obviously wanted to be a good host but he likely also feared for the men's safety since he knew how wicked and dangerous the streets of Sodom could be at night.

“And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night” – The men decline the invitation, perhaps to test the sincerity of Lot's hospitality. More likely, however, they declined for similar reasons of courtesy that we often decline gifts from strangers until we are pressed to take them.

“And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house” – Lot strongly insists that they come to his house, driven by his responsibility as host as well as his concern for their safety. The men eventually agree to Lot's invitation and enter his house for the night.

“and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat” – Lot takes his role as host very seriously and prepares a feast for his guests and proceeds to feed them a good meal.

⁴ But before they lay down, the men of the city, *even* the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: ⁵ And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where *are* the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.

“But before they lay down” – After eating but before they have a chance to go to bed, trouble starts brewing outside Lot's house.

“the men of the city, *even* the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter” – The motivation for the men of Sodom surrounding Lot's house was not limited to any age group, location within the city or social status, giving us an idea of how widespread the wickedness was in Sodom.

“And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where *are* the men which came in to thee this night?” - Apparently news traveled fast in Sodom that there were strangers in the city and that they were at Lot's house.

“bring them out unto us, that we may know them” – Here is the motivation that compelled these men to converge at Lot's house. The Hebrew word “know” is the same one used to describe the intimate knowledge a man has with his wife during sexual intercourse. The men in this crowd were motivated by their homosexual urges to at best have sex with the men under Lot's roof and at worst rape them.

⁶ And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, ⁷ And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.

“And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him” – Lot goes outside to face the crowd and shuts the door behind him in an attempt to protect the men.

“And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly” – It's possible that Lot had seen these homosexual rape gangs before and understood what they had planned for his guests. Whether the crowd of men wanted consensual sex or to rape the men, Lot still considered it wickedness and begged the crowd to not go through with their plans.

Verses 8-23: In a questionable prioritization of his guests above his own family, Lot offers to give his daughters to the crowd as a substitute for them raping his guests. The crowd becomes angry and threatens to treat Lot worse than what they have planned for his guests. The angels pull Lot back into the house and cause blindness to come upon the crowd. The angels reveal that they are there to destroy the city and urge Lot to gather his family and flee the city before the destruction begins. They give Lot and his family strict instructions not to look back as they are fleeing.

²⁴ Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; ²⁵ And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

Some have tried to explain the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as some natural disaster like a volcanic eruption or similar catastrophe. While the LORD could have used such natural forces to destroy the cities, He is not limited to these to accomplish His will. He could have easily supernaturally poured out fire and brimstone from the sky to totally destroy people, buildings and vegetation. The LORD literally wiped the cities of the plain off the map, leaving no trace. The area is now believed to be under the south end of the Dead Sea.

²⁶ But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

Lot and his family were given explicit instructions not to look behind them as they fled the destruction of the city (v. 17 *“Escape for thy life; look not behind thee”*) but Lot's wife disobeyed. Apparently she looked back toward Sodom because her heart was still there. Jesus indicates that this is the case when describing the future day when the Jews will need to flee from the Antichrist in **Luke 17:31-32** *“³¹ In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. ³² Remember Lot's wife.”* Jesus warns that love of the things of this world can cost you your life as it did for Lot's wife. Her heart was still fastened on what she had in the wicked city of Sodom and she paid the price with her life.