

## For GC Discussion

- How does Abraham's interaction with God inform and challenge our prayer lives?
- What does this whole episode teach us about God?
- What can we learn from Lot's journey towards the city of Sodom, and from the affect on his wife and daughters?

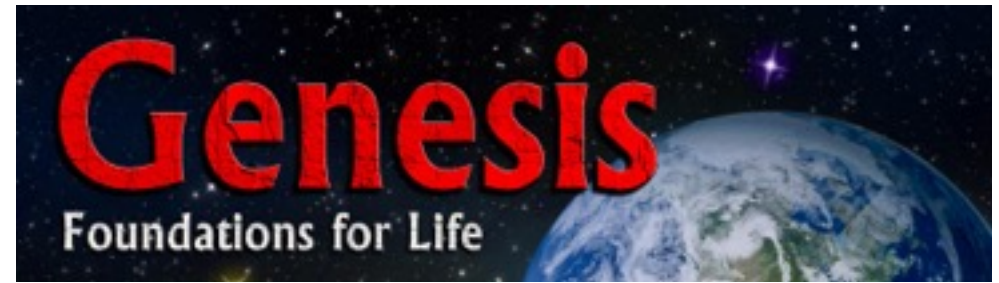
## For the Kids

Do Lot and his family deserve to be saved? What does this tell us about God?

**After Christmas:** we will continue our study of the life of Abraham as we near the birth of the 'son of promise'.

### *Notes and Questions*

**For Worship:** Listen to '*What if His people prayed*' by Casting Crowns. You can find it on YouTube, or on the Hill City Church blog on the website.



## Week 10: Abraham Pt4: Intercession - Chs 18-19

### **This Weeks Summary**

This week we take a break from the main storyline to see Abraham interceding for Sodom and Gomorrah, and the subsequent redemption of Lot despite the destruction of the cities.

### **For Study:**

- Study the following passages, all of which contain an example of intercessory prayer - what can we learn from each one of these Scriptures?

- **Daniel 9:1-19**
- **Numbers 14:1-24**
- **Numbers 16:1-50**
- **Exodus 32:1-34:9**
- **Nehemiah 1:1-11**
- **Romans 8:31-9:5**
- **Numbers 21:4-9**

This week we are focussing on Abraham's intercession for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, primarily because his nephew Lot is living in the city of Sodom. It would be interesting now to think a little about Lot's journey to Sodom, and what we can learn from it.

### **1. It began with disunity among God's people:**

The initial cause of Lot leaving Abraham's travelling party was a dissension among their herdsmen (13:7). There doesn't seem to be any way they could get on together, and so they made the decision that they must separate. Lot allows the disagreement to cause him to leave the company of the man who has the blessing of God resting upon him - the fledgling gathering of God's chosen people. The decision leads to disastrous consequences for himself and his family, and you have to ask the question whether it would have turned out the same if he had worked it out with Abraham, and the travelling party had stayed together? How often do disagreements among God's people over things that surely should be able to be sorted out lead to people separating themselves from the community that provides so much of what they need to live as a child of God? The church shouldn't be a place where our own self-interests reign, but where love reigns, and where we do as Abraham did and prefer others above ourselves. We should realise that each of us need the love, support and community that comes from the church far more than we need to church to be exactly as we want it to be, and we should bear that in mind when the differences of opinion that there will inevitably be in church life turn up. Lot's selfishness took him away from a place of safety and led him to move towards a dangerous place of compromise.

### **2. Lot moves close to Sodom, and is eventually drawn in:**

After the disagreement between Abraham and Lot's servants, we find in chapter 13:12 that Lot takes his tent 'as far as Sodom'. The men of Sodom were great sinners against God (13:13), and in his desire to have the best land available Lot takes himself and his family close to this haven of wickedness. Who knows what was in Lot's mind as he makes this decision - maybe it was the advantages of living close to a city, or maybe he felt more than capable of being close to such a place but not being drawn into their lifestyle. Whatever he was thinking, it isn't long (at least in the text) before we find Lot has been drawn into the city itself. In chapter 14:12 during the account of Lot's capture and captivity, we're told that he is now 'dwelling in Sodom'. Whatever strength of resistance Lot may have thought he had against the pull of this wicked place has gone and Lot has allowed himself to be moved into a place where his soul would be 'tormented' (2 Peter 2:8)

with the evil that he would see and hear. There's a couple of clear lessons that we can learn from Lot's experience. Firstly, that if our framework for making decisions in life moves away from God-honouring motives, and becomes one of selfishness, we can be sure that we have begun a road that will lead to more and more compromise. Secondly we can easily think, just like Lot probably did that we can play with fire but not allow ourselves to be burnt. We would do well to heed the warning that Paul gives Timothy to 'flee youthful lusts' (2 Tim 2:22) - not to play with them, or set our tents up near them, but to run away from them because sin is deceptive at heart and before we know it we'll have allowed ourselves to be tormented or worse.

### **3. Two very different outcomes:**

There are two very different ways of looking at this whole episode. Firstly we must look at the devastating end that befalls Lot's wife, stemming from Lot's unwise choice of home for his family. The New Testament encourages us to remember her as she is a sobering example of someone who was so attracted by the things of the world that she was ultimately destroyed by them. She ignored the angelic command not to even look back at the city from which God was rescuing them, and despite the fact that it was worthy of nothing by destruction and death, her heart was still drawn back to it. She paid the price for loving the things of this world, rather than the God who was willing to rescue her from judgment, and we too face the exact same temptations every day. The evil in the world around us will always be attractive, but the story of Sodom and Gomorrah leaves us with no shadow of a doubt where that kind of life will lead us - death is always the end result, and remembering that will serve us well in our fight against sin. However, there is another way of looking at this - though Lot clearly made an unwise choice to move his family into a city of wickedness (and his accountability for its affect on his family is another sobering aspect of this story) - the truth is, we may not have the same luxury of making the choice that he did. If we're honest, as we look around at the towns and cities we live in, the reality is that we already live in Sodom, and God hasn't called us to move out into the countryside and set up some kind of commune that is completely separate from the world. In a strange way this story should encourage us that Lot wasn't drawn into the rampant wickedness around him. As I've heard it said, there's a difference between walking into a lions den and being thrown into one, and we can be confident that when we are forced to live in a place full of wickedness that we have a God who can protect us in the midst of it. As the scriptures tell us, there is no temptation that God cannot help us to stand up under so that we might be pure in the midst of evil all around (1 Cor 10:13).