



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

February 24/25, 2018 - Andy Steiger

Yes! God Will Do Right. - (Genesis 19)

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

Today we have the privilege of looking into God's word, we are continuing in our series on Abraham that's called "Abe." And the reason that we've entitled this sermon series "Abe" is because there are times that we've looked at his life that *Abraham* looks good, right? He get is right. But there are often times that he doesn't look so good, and gets it wrong, he's just *Abe*. We've entitled this series "Abe" because he's an ordinary guy, just like us. Gets it right sometimes, often gets it wrong. So as we continue in this series, I hope that it is becoming ever more clear that the story is all about God. That he is the main character, he is the hero in this story, and not Abraham. It's what God is doing in the life of Abraham that makes Abraham significant. This story is about God.

And today is no different, as we continue in that story, and we find ourselves looking at a significant piece of Scripture that has been with us for centuries, people have talked about. Today we're looking at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. A story that has been talked about throughout the centuries, that has become a metaphor, in fact, of God's justice, of God's judgement over that city. And we're going to look at that in chapter 19, but before we do that, we're going to take a moment to look at chapter 18 because it might surprise you that the context of Genesis 19 is a philosophical conversation that God has with Abraham. So if you have your Bible, turn with me. We're going to start by looking at Genesis 18. And what we find as we turn there, that God and two angels have come to Abraham as men, and they've come to his house, they're having a meal with him, Abraham has welcomed them in, and God has reminded Abraham about the promise that he has given him, that he's going to be a great nation, and God's going to bless him with a child. Proceeds to explain to Abraham that this time next year, you will have that child. To which Sarah, his wife, laughs at. You know, in their old age, yeah right that's going to happen. But then the story continues on, as we read that in verse 16 here, the two men, the two angels get up, and when the men got up to leave, they looked down towards Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. Now Abraham doesn't understand yet what's going on, he doesn't know why these angels are heading down to Sodom. And the next thing we read here is a unique part of Scripture, in which we begin to hear this inner monologue of God. God begins to talk to himself, and not because God's trying to figure out what to do, but to clue us in to what is going to happen. This is an important foreshadowing moment in the Bible. We read then in Genesis 18:17,

"Then the LORD said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I



have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him [now here, this is key here] to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

What we see here is this is referring back, that there is a covenantal relationship between Abraham and God. God has promised to be faithful to Abraham, and Abraham is needing to be faithful to God. But what we see is a foreshadowing of a relationship that is to come. See, Abraham will become the father of a great nation, the nation of Israel. And through that nation God is going to bless the world. But what we begin to see is a foreshadowing of how that relationship is going to look. You see, the name Israel means “one who wrestles with God,” and what we see as we read our Scriptures is that Israel wrestled with God constantly. Sometimes they got it right, often they got it wrong. And in the midst of Israel wrestling with God and often getting it wrong, there is this God who remains faithful to his people, even though they do not remain faithful to him. And this begins to frame the context of what we’re going to read next, as Abraham begins to learn that these angels are heading down into Sodom to destroy that city. And now this philosophical conversation begins where Abraham begins to talk to God about what he’s going to do. We read in Genesis 18:23 now,

“Then Abraham approached him [approached God] and said: ‘Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?’”

Now I just want to pause there for a moment. Think about what Abraham is saying. See, Abraham doesn’t have a problem with God going down there and destroying the wicked, you know, nobody’s asking, “Why do bad things happen to bad people?” You know? If anything, there’s a level in us where we want justice to come to those people who do bad things. The challenge that we have is, what about the righteous? What about bad things happening to good people? That’s what concerns us, and that’s what’s concerning Abraham here. Now continuing on in Genesis 18:24.

“What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? [Abraham asks God.] Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? [No no no,] Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! [Now here’s the key question that Abraham asks God, that we’ll be looking at today.] Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Notice what he’s asking. “God, are you good? Are you a good judge? God, can I trust you?” Now listen, I don’t know about you, church, but there have been a number of times in my life where I’ve asked God this question. “Will you do right in this situation, God? God, in this situation that’s going on in my life, are you going to do good? Are you the kind of God that I can trust?”

Not that long ago, I...for a number of years I’ve been teaching an apologetics course at Columbia Bible College. Recently I’ve had to pull back from that, just because of business, but I’ve loved teaching that course, and if you’re unfamiliar with that word “apologetics,” it’s a Greek word, “apologia,” it means to give an answer or a reason for the hope that you have, in Jesus in particular. So in that class I was giving good reason that we have to believe that God does exist, and that the character of this God is



good. But yet in light of that we would raise, and wrestle through philosophical questions like, why is there suffering and evil in the world? In light of God's character, is he really good? Can I really trust him? And I remember one day after class, this girl came up to me. She said, "Andy, can I talk with you?" We went to the cafeteria and began to talk, and through a lot of tears and sobbing, she began to explain to me just a life of brokenness. Maybe many of you can relate to this. A life of suffering and challenge and difficulty. And through her tears she just began to ask, "Andy, I just don't know if I can trust God. I'm not sure if he's good. In light of all that's gone on in my life. Is he a good God? Is he going to judge fairly?" I think we can all relate to that at some level.

So Abraham is getting into this philosophical question with God, "Look, you're going to go down to that city, and you're going to destroy it, but what if there's righteous people in there, what if there's 50 righteous in there God?" And God says to Abraham, "Abraham, I won't destroy it if there's 50 righteous people there." Then Abraham, I think he begins to think to himself, I know who lives in Sodom. I know the kind of news I've been hearing that's coming out of Sodom. Maybe 50's a little too generous. You know what I'm talking about. We know what our world is like. I tell you, if you ever start to wonder about the depravity of humanity, just go read some YouTube comments, right? Spend a little time on Twitter. Surf the web. You'll be...you know, all of a sudden you'll remember. Oh yeah, that's what people are like. Right? Abraham's thinking about that. He goes, I might need to hedge my bets a little on this. "Well God, what if there's 45 righteous in that city?" God goes, "I won't destroy it." Abraham says, "Well what if there's 40?"

"I won't destroy it."

"What if there's 30?"

"I won't destroy it." Then he goes to 20, then he goes to 10. And God goes, "Abraham, I won't destroy it if there's 10 righteous people in that city." Now Abraham stops at that number. And I think it's interesting that he stops at 10. Because it's important for us to understand, church, that this is more than just a philosophical conversation. And we know that, don't we? Our faith is more than just some sort of intellectual, philosophical conversation. This is about the heart, this is about where we live, this is about our friends and family. And Abraham knows that his nephew, Lot, and his family live in Sodom. He doesn't want that city destroyed, he loves his family. But I'm sure he's thinking to himself, this: I know that the number 10 is a large enough number to encompass them, and surely my family is righteous. Surely Lot and his household are good.

This is the context that we find ourselves in as we come to Genesis 19. And we begin to see that the context is, whether or not this God will be good, can we trust him? And think about this for a moment, as we've been going through the life of Abraham. Abraham has just started this relationship with God. Abraham has no history with this God, you know what I'm saying? All he knows is what God has been doing in his life, he doesn't have the privilege of looking back through a history of faithfulness. And so he's starting to wonder, I'm following this God, but I mean, is this God good? And this is the context, as we see these two angels, as these two men, they come into the city of Sodom, and immediately they're greeted by Lot. Now this is one of those moments, as we've seen in the life of Abraham, where he gets it right. You see, Lot's at the gate, that's where the commerce of the city would have been taking place, it's where the life of the city was at, it's where the news would have been, it's where people would have been talking and discussing. And most likely, Lot probably worked at the gate,



from the context of what we read. And in fact, it looks as if he was probably a judge in that city. Which is interesting, because really the context that we're seeing is that we've got God as the judge on one hand, and we've got Abraham, or Lot, humanity, on the other end. And the question that's set before us is, who will judge fairly? Who is good? Who can you place your trust in? And Lot immediately greets these two foreigners and he gets it right at first. He welcomes them into his house, he cares for them, and you're like, man, Lot is a good guy. But then darkness begins to descend, and the wickedness of Lot becomes apparent, as a mob comes to Lot's house and begins to pound on the door and these men that have come want access to these foreigners because they want to rape them. You begin to realize that the wickedness of Sodom is severe. That this is a broken place. But Lot still gets it right, he comes out of the house, he closes the door, and he's seeking to protect these men, and tries convincing this mob to go away. But then, but then he gets it desperately wrong. And Lot offers his daughters in place of these men, and you begin to realize that Lot isn't as righteous as I thought he was.

You have to understand church, that is a wicked act, both in the Judeo-Christian worldview, the Jewish worldview that he was living in, that is a wicked act in the ancient near-Eastern culture that he lived in, that was a wicked act. And one of the things that I'm hoping you're beginning to see as we've gone through the life of Abraham, and as we look at Lot today, the Bible is not about to sugarcoat people. You notice that? The Bible does not put a gloss on Abraham, look how great he is. No no no, it'll tell you when he gets it right, but it'll tell you straight when he gets it wrong. The same thing is true of Lot. And the reason is because the hero of the story isn't Abraham, the hero isn't Lot, that the hero is, in fact, God. It's going to give you a clear and straightforward picture of what people look like. And that's what we see. In fact, it's so bad the angels have to intervene with Lot, they pull Lot back into his house and go, "Listen, Lot, we're not going to go that path, we've got this under control." They blind these men that are trying to get to them, and then we pick up in the story now, in your Bibles, we're in chapter 19 verse 12 with this. Now just to remind you, if there are 10 righteous people, it will not be destroyed. But the angels have already seen enough. And we read in Genesis 19:12,

"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? [Why?] Get them out of here, because we are going to destroy this place.'"

There are not 10 righteous people in this city. And in fact, one of the major questions that we're going to look at is simply this, is there anyone righteous in this city? They say that,

"'The outcry to the LORD against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.' 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."

They thought that God's justice was a joke. Listen church, I wonder how often it is for us that we think of God's justice as a joke. And in many ways, I think that we feel that way in two different ways. On the one hand, we see the wickedness of our world, and listen, if you've been watching the news, we see



the wickedness of our world. And we wonder, will justice ever come to that situation? And I think that there's a part of us that's deeply afraid that those historical moments, or those moments in our lives that justice will never be served, and God's justice is just a joke. But I think that there's an even deeper aspect of us that really wonders, will God actually judge the wicked? Will he actually bring them to account? Will he actually destroy Sodom? It's interesting, by the way, when Jonah goes to Nineveh and says, "Listen, you need to repent or you'll be destroyed," the Ninevites repent and God doesn't destroy the city. But what happens in Sodom?

This next weekend, by the way, is the Apologetics Canada Conference, which I'm really looking forward to. And by the way, tickets are still available if you'd like to come, and that is a shameless plug, I'm not beyond that. [Laughter] We'd love to have you out. But this is our eighth year doing the conference, and as I was preparing for this morning, I was reminded of the very first conference we did at Coquitlam Alliance Church, when we brought out a keynote speaker by the name of Steven Collins, who's an archaeologist, that works in Jordan. He's been digging at the site of Sodom for around 20 years. And in fact, he just recently published this book in 2016, I think we have a picture of it here, *Discovering the City of Sodom*. And when he came, he came and gave a presentation of what he had found in that city. And he began to give a presentation of God's justice that is no joke. A place that was actually destroyed. And he began to show these pictures. Pictures of ash layer, of a place that had been burned. Of sulfur and fire, as the Bible tells us, that rained down over Sodom. And pictures of bones of real people who were really destroyed in that destruction. And it was sobering hearing him give this talk as a reminder that God's justice isn't a joke. That God really will destroy the wicked, and that you and I are really in need of help.

Because as we continue to read, and I want to pick up again in verse 16, we begin to see not only is there not 10 righteous people. There is in fact, no one righteous in the city. For in verse 16 we see that,

"When he hesitated, [that's Lot and his family, they hesitate to leave the city] 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. [Even though there was no one righteous, God was still merciful.] 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!'"

It's interesting, by the way, the destruction that came to Sodom, and as archaeologists have dug in that area, what they've seen is that area dates to the time of Abraham, but that nothing was built on that city until the time of the Romans. It was seen as a cursed place, a place in which God's judgement had descended. And these angels are saying, "You need to run for the hills, because God's justice is coming." And even in that, even in them hesitating, And God showing them mercy that, it's one of those moments, right? Again Lot gets it wrong, he has to be pulled out of the city, and even as he's fleeing for his life, heading for the mountains, Lot says to the angels, "Those mountains are really far." You're like, are you kidding me? They've already pulled you out. And then he points over to Zoar, and he says, "Could I just go there?" And you can almost imagine, you know, the angels just face-palming at this point. You know, and there God's still merciful to him and says, "Fine. We will



spare Zoar, you can go to Zoar. You don't have to run as far as the mountains, Lot." And again you see a God that is merciful to his people.

One of the things that we see as we read the story of Lot and Sodom is that there is no one righteous in this city. In fact, the apostle Paul put it this way in Romans 3:10, and he says this, quoting King David from Psalms 14:1,

"There is no one righteous, no, not one."

And what we begin to see as we think about this conversation that we've been in this morning, will the judge of all the earth do right? Yes, God will do right, because God is a just God, and justice is coming. But when we begin to reflect on that, and that there is no one righteous, we begin to realize that we find ourselves in real trouble, church. See, because when we begin to think about what's not just going on in our world, when we begin to think about what's going on in here, <motions to his heart> when we're honest with ourselves, we know very well that we are not as good as we think we are. Yeah, there's times in my life that I get it right, but there are a lot of times when I get it wrong, and I am in desperate need of a savior. This is the foreshadowing we're seeing of a God that has not left you, but a people that need saving.

It reminds me of a couple years ago when I went on vacation with my wife and kids, we went to the Rockies. And the season had just started, the snows had melted, and we were going to go hang out at this lake. And as soon as we walked out of the car, I began to hear a man screaming for his life. Now I don't know if you've ever heard somebody scream for their life before, but there is a distinct difference. When you begin to hear somebody crying out for help that is desperately in need, you know that there is this qualitative difference to it. And I began to think about that, and about, you know, do we really understand our need for saving? Because when you understand your need for saving, you don't care how shameful it looks or that screaming or who's going to hear, I mean, you just cry out for help because you know of your desperate need. And I ran down to this lake, and when I got down there, I saw that this canoe had tipped over and there was a man thrashing in the water, and I was watching him drown as he screamed for help. I ran down to the area where he had rented the canoe, and there was one man working there, and he was trying desperately to put this big canoe into the water. And I helped him, I got that thing in there, and I said, "Listen, I'll help you," and we raced off to save this guy. And we're just paddling as hard as we could.

And I've got to tell you, on a slightly different note, the humanity came to the surface to me, and quickly this rescue mission was a lot less about him and about how good I was looking, right? As this crowd began to form along the lake, you know what I'm talking about. My wife and kids were standing there, and I was thinking, you know, I was starting to stand up a little bit straighter, right? Sit up a little bit straighter as I'm rowing towards this guy. And the wind is just blowing through my eyebrows, right? [Laughter] I'm looking pretty good, church. And I started to have visions of glory, you know what I'm talking about. And I imagined myself, you know, coming to this man, and grabbing him and pulling him out, you know, and having a moment for the photo, and shaking him off, putting him in the canoe. It's going to be fantastic. And I, church, I was five feet from that kind of glory. I was just about there to



rescue this man, and would you believe, he stood up. Couldn't have waited. And I'm not talking that it was this deep, <points to his shoulders> I'm talking, it was like this deep, <points to his legs> okay? [Laughter] Listen, nothing kills a rescue mission like a man standing up and just walking out of the lake. Probably one of the most shameful walks of that guy's life, right?

Moral of the story: make sure it's not deep, right? No, moral of the story is, listen, when you know you're in trouble, you will scream out for help. When you know you need rescuing, you will cry out. And listen, as we look at the goodness and as we look at the justice of God, there is no standing up in that lake. There is no way that we can save ourselves. We are in deep trouble, church. And we are in need of rescuing. But here's one of the foundational questions that's being asked here. And that is, do you see that you need a savior? Do you see that you need saving? Are you beyond crying out for help and asking God to come and to rescue you? Because you know that you're broken. You know that you need help.

It's interesting, in 2 Peter 2, Peter says that Lot is a righteous man. And I read that and I thought, Peter? Did you read this same story I read? Lot wasn't a righteous man, he was a broken man, in desperate need of a savior. A savior, in fact, that God sent in the form of two angels. But what we see is, Peter's fully aware of that. Peter's not saying that Lot was rescued from Sodom because he was found to be righteous. No, in fact, God was the one that was found to be righteous and rescued Lot. Peter understands that, and in 1 Peter 3:18, he says this, he says,

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.”

I like the way that R.C. Sproul Jr. put it, he says, “Why do bad things happen to good people? Well, that only happened once, and He volunteered.” What Peter's saying is, you and I have a Savior that makes us righteous, and that is Jesus Christ, the righteous for the unrighteous. And Paul in Romans 4 puts it this way, that Abraham was counted as righteous, why? Because of his faith in God. It was God that was righteous, and that was attributed to him in his faith. Which is amazing if you think about it. A faith that got it right sometimes but oftentimes got it wrong, but yet, in the end, who remains faithful? Is it man? No, it's God that remains faithful. Over and over again remained faithful to Abraham, remained faithful to Lot, remains faithful to us. A God who we need. A God who loves you so much that this story is foreshadowed in a history of a God that remains faithful to his people, all the way to the point of sending a Savior, his very own Son, who came into the city of Jerusalem, a city that was under God's judgement. The world, under God's judgement. And Jesus took the justice of God upon himself, on the Cross, he took that fire, he took that brimstone of sulfur if you will, he took that justice of God over wickedness on himself to make a way for us. To save you and me. Because he is good, not because I'm good. And through him, I have a righteousness, we have a righteousness, not in us, but in him. And listen, if you've never placed your trust in God, I want to encourage you to do that.

I had the privilege of sitting with that girl from CBC, who through tears, as her and I talked about what had gone on in her life, we turned that corner and began to place our attention on to who God is and the person of Jesus Christ, and what he has done for us. And in tears, she just cried out to God and



just said, “God, will you please save me?” And then she said this, church, something that we need to think a lot about, she said, “God, I am learning to trust you, I’m going to follow you.” And I want to encourage you to continue to place your trust in God, he is good. And he will save you, he will keep his promise. He has kept his promise and he will continue to keep his promise. And it’s interesting to me that in the story we see that Lot’s wife looks back. Not because there was anything magical about looking back that she was destroyed, the Bible tells us, but Jesus seems to indicate in Luke 17 that she went back to the city, and she was destroyed. I want to encourage you, those of you that have been following God and placing your trust in him, continue to do so, do not look back. He is good, he is faithful, and he will save you. Let’s pray,

God, I am so thankful that you love us. I’m so thankful that your love for us is so great that you would send your Son who volunteered to come to save the unrighteous. To save us, because you are good. And you will judge fairly. God, as we think about that, we are convicted of our need for you. And I just pray this morning, that we would once again remind ourselves that we can trust you. And maybe there’s some of us that have never done that before, I pray that they would place their trust in you, maybe for the first time, and follow you. For you are good, and we are thankful for what we have in you. And we pray all of this in your power and in your name Jesus. Amen.