

The inevitability of God's judgement

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning. Thank you, Dylan, for reading that charming passage. Well, obviously this is not a text I would choose to preach. You know, it's not like all week I've been in my office going, oh, I can't wait to preach about sodomy, gang rape, and incest on Sunday.
- And yet that is actually the advantage of teaching the Bible like we do here at St. Mark's, where we systematically go through books and we deal with whatever comes up in the passage.
- We don't skip anything, no matter how difficult or unsavory it might be. And so doing that, reading the Bible and studying the Bible and teaching the Bible like that, forces us to deal with passages we wouldn't otherwise choose to deal with, but that are here in the Bible for a reason.
- And just as well, because this passage has loads to teach us, especially today. As we read about two of God's representatives, angels, visiting a city to see just how morally corrupted it had become, and whether it was due for God's judgment.
- That was what they were doing there. That was their mission. And it's no surprise that the presenting issue that convinces these angels that it is in fact due for God's judgment is the city's sexual depravity.
- [1 : 2 0] In fact, a society's attitude to sex is often the clearest indicator for how far it has fallen morally today as well.
- And I wonder what those angels would make of our society today if they visited. Probably not much different, right? Sure, we've still got this veneer of Christian values and codes of decency in our society, but that's being eroded at a rapid pace today.
- Killing unborn babies in the name of free sex without consequences is the norm. It's accepted. It's sick. But it's fine, according to our society.
- In our public schools, 13-year-olds are being taught that it's good to be sexually active. And behind closed doors and accessible with the click of a mouse are sexual depravities to cater for any tastes.
- Believe me, we wouldn't want those two angels visiting Cape Town today or any of our cities, would we? Because our society is actually not that different to Sodom's.
- [2 : 3 0] It's going down morally, and the story of Sodom is here in our Bible to help us to make sure that we don't go down with it. And so let's have a look to see what we can learn from this very important story.
- And the first thing we learn is how important it is to actually come to terms with the depravity of our society. And not to try to pretend like it's not there, like lots seem to do at first.
- You know, this story begins with the angels arriving at Sodom after sunset. And by the way, these are no fluffy-winged cherubs in white dresses. These are agents of God's justice on assignment to investigate Sodom for God's wrath.

But they probably didn't look like that. They probably looked just like ordinary people at this point. A lot may not have known from the beginning who they were. He figures it out later.

But he receives them with respect. As a family member of Abraham, he knows how to host people, evidently, just like Abraham did in the previous chapter, remember, when these same angels arrived at his dwelling.

[3 : 42] And so a lot insists, no, come stay with me. And then they say, no, it's fine. And he says, no, no, come stay with me. But he doesn't tell them why. He doesn't tell them why he's so insistent that they come stay with him.

He doesn't want them to find out just how bad his city really is. You know, we get the sense that Lot is almost trying to cover up its depravity. You know, kind of like when you have visitors and you keep them away from the bedroom so they don't see the mess.

You close the door. Or at least we do. And so he doesn't want his visitors to see everything about his city. Except he can't keep the mess hidden for long.

A mob forms outside his house wanting to sexually abuse his guests as if that's just, you know, normal Friday night entertainment. And so Lot, now we've got to give it to him.

He tries to protect his guests. He goes outside, closes the door behind him, and confronts this mob face to face. It's quite admirable. Quite heroic. But then, of course, all the good feelings we might have for Lot disappear when he offers his two virgin daughters to the mob to, quote, do with as they wish.

[4 : 54] Now, lots of people have tried to defend Lot's actions here. But come on. That's despicable. You don't do that. No matter how you look at it, that's just bad.

His daughters had just as much right to his protection as his guests did. And so the question is, why does he do that? Why does he do such a despicable and shocking thing? Well, it's because he doesn't want to oppose the evil of his neighbors.

He rather wants to appease it. He tries to satisfy them to make peace. He's a peace-loving guy. He wants to keep peace with his neighbors. So instead of actually going against their evil, he wants to satisfy it.

He wants to appease it. And I think that's the first major thing that goes wrong in this story. Lot wanting to accommodate the depravity of his society. And yet that's exactly what God's covenant people have been tempted to do in every age.

We read throughout the Bible and we see the same desire. Rather than to be different and rather than to make enemies, God's people have always been tempted to accommodate the depravity of their neighbors.

[6 : 03] Rather than oppose evil and speak out against it and do what is within our power to prevent evil in our society, we can be tempted to appease it in order to keep the peace.

You know what I'm talking about? I mean, we saw this in our own country's history, didn't we? When the apartheid government was guilty of many evils against people of color, what did white Christians do?

Not much. I mean, some stood against it, but not enough to force the government's hand and to stop the evils from happening. Many making excuses for it or just ignoring it.

You know, ignorance is bliss. So as not to rock the boat. So as not to cause any problems in society. Everything's peaceful. Let's just keep the peace and therefore not confront evil.

Do you see how common Lot's actions actually are throughout history? But we can't do that as a church. As the church that God has placed in this world, in this country, we are messengers of truth.

[7 : 05] We are holders of God's revelation to the world. And if a society is involved in sin, whether it's racism or abortion or sexual depravity, we have a responsibility to let people know what God thinks about it.

Nobody else is going to. And we have a responsibility not to make excuses for it or overlook it or ignore it for the sake of peace.

And yet we'll be tempted to. Because the moment we do, we'll be treated the same as Lot was in verse 9. Have a look. Get out of our way, they replied.

This fellow came here as a foreigner and he wants to play the judge. Well, we'll treat you worse than them. See, that's what always happens, isn't it? When we warn our culture of the danger of sin.

We'll be labeled judgmental. We'll be laughed at. We'll be mistreated often, and Christians are today. And we'll be laughed at like Lot's sons-in-law did when he tried to warn them.

[8 : 11] Down in verse 14, he said, hurry, get out of this place. Because the Lord is about to destroy the city. But his sons-in-law thought he was joking. Ah, Lot, nice one. That's funny.

Judgment. God's going to destroy the city. Look, it's a great city. Why would God? Come on, Lot. Don't be so old-fashioned. And here's the thing.

You know, the world does think that way, don't they? The world doesn't think that God's judgment of sin is serious. They laugh at it. God doesn't have a problem with my lifestyle.

He hasn't done anything to stop my lifestyle. He hasn't done anything to stop the way I'm living. If he's even there, I'm just going to carry on.

See, God's judgment is seen as a joke today. And anybody who warns of it is seen as a party pooper. Except it's stories like this that are in our Bibles to shock us into realizing that God's judgment is no joke.

[9 : 15] As we go on to see in the next lesson of this story. And that is the inevitability of God's judgment on human depravity.

So now the mob is pressing towards Lot after his failed negotiation. Things are heading downhill fast. And this is when the two angels step in and give us a glimpse of what they're capable of.

Instantly striking the mob with blindness and pulling Lot inside out of danger and closing the door. Now, at that point in the story, right? Now you've got this mob outside.

The angels have just, I mean, they're obviously very powerful. God has invested them with a lot of power to carry out his purposes. And they use just a little bit of that incredible divine power.

The mob is struck blind. And you think they would have got the hint, right? You think they would have gone, okay, let's back off. But no. They keep coming.

[10 : 16] Groping towards the door in a blind, lust-fueled craze. It's a shocking scene, isn't it? But it's even more shocking when we realize that it's a description of what any society would be reduced to when left to itself.

Without any constraints by God. That's why Sodom got to this point. They had no revelation from God. No constraints, no laws from God to keep society civil.

And so it went downhill. They got into this, you know, this scene that we read. It's like zombies. They're just blinded. They just can't control themselves.

But that's what sin does. If we let it get control of us. And without God's grace actually constraining it in our lives and in our societies. And we're fortunate today that even in the most pagan of societies, many of them, Christian values, still underpin and keep people just with a general sense of moral obligation.

For how long, who knows? But people still in our society have a general sense of what is right and what is wrong. But don't take that as granted.

[11 : 31] And realize most of that is only because we've had hundreds of years of Christianity in most of those societies. But this here in Sodom is in the Bible to give us just this raw picture of what we're capable of as humans.

We're not good people. We're not good people. As one traditional prayer of confession says, there is no health in us. But this is also a raw picture of what happens when that total depravity comes up against God's perfect justice.

And it's not a pretty picture. Have a look down to verse 24. After Lot and his family escape, then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah.

From the Lord out of the heavens. Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities. And also the vegetation in the land.

It's an interesting note there. Also the vegetation in the land. It reminds me of Chernobyl. You know, I don't know if you've watched that excellent series recently.

[12 : 44] But even today and for thousands of years in future, that land will be uninhabitable. It's, the land is desolate. And this, this was far bigger an area than Chernobyl ever was.

And it was a soberingly effective judgment, right? So if the burning molten sulfur at 200 degrees heat raining from the sky didn't get you, then the poisonous sulfur dioxide being released from it would have finished the job.

But chemical warfare wasn't invented in World War I. God used it way before. To show us, here again, just like he did in the flood, the last time he rained down judgment.

There's no, it's no mistake the author uses that word rained. To remind us that again, God is showing us, hey, I'm in charge, right?

I'm the judge of this world. I have every right to bring consequences on the people who I made when you're not living in line with my will and my plan for this world. And yet he is patient and long-suffering.

[13 : 56] He waits. He investigates. I mean, God is sovereign, and yet he sent these angels to show us he is doing his due diligence. He is not just judging willy-nilly, just like left, right, and center.

He is making sure that his judgment is just and that it's timely. But he's throughout, I mean, we've seen how society, as we've read through Genesis, has kind of gone down.

And God is long-suffering, and we see throughout the Bible how long-suffering and patient God is before he brings his judgment and the warnings he gives through his prophets.

But what we also learn here is when this judge does bring down the gavel and make a judgment, you don't want to be on the wrong side of it. Okay, we need to understand and fear God's character as the God of justice of this universe.

And it's stories like this that help us to do that. But even this actually was not, by far, not the worst that judgment can get. In fact, it was never meant to be any kind of final judgment, this judgment of Sodom.

[15 : 11] Before the chapter's up, we read that sexual depravity is still alive and well, right? And so the main purpose of this judgment wasn't to stop sin. Like the flood, its main purpose wasn't so much to solve the problem, but rather to warn of the final judgment one day that will solve the problem, but that's going to be much worse.

God is using judgments like this on Sodom to just show us that he's serious about sin and that you don't mess with him. But they're all actually pointing to the final judgment one day that is still in the future.

You know, people read these stories, and I've spoken to a lot of people who read these stories in the Old Testament, these samples of God's judgment. And they say, oh, how could God wipe out thousands of men, women, and children?

You know, people who, oh, how could God do that? He's a genocidal maniac. How could he wipe out so many people? Of course he can. He made them. He can do what he wants. He's God.

Come on. What those people don't realize, though, when they say, oh, how could God do that? Is that these judgments in the Old Testament, you ain't seen nothing yet.

[16 : 23] These are actually acts of mercy. The depraved world we live in deserves much more. People every day living in open rebellion to their creator, flouting his laws and instructions.

And yet God, in his great patience, has held back that final judgment and given us warning after warning after warning before that day comes.

As Peter says in his second letter, wanting none to perish but all to come to repentance. Yes, God is a God of great and fearful justice, but he's also a God of great patience and mercy.

Wanting none to perish but all to come to repentance. And yet in the very same breath, Peter goes on in his letter and says, but the day of the Lord will come like a thief. Right? A thief doesn't make an appointment.

Right? You don't get a phone call and the thief says, oh, I'm planning to rob your house on Wednesday night. Right? Is that convenient? No. God doesn't do that when it comes to judgment.

[17 : 26] When it comes to his final day of the Lord, when it's coming, it's going to come like a thief, we're told. Without warning. And then Peter goes on just to sober us to that fact and he writes this in his second letter.

He reduced the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes and condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is coming to the ungodly.

Those who are not on the right side of God. Okay, so this is, and we see in the New Testament, this judgment in the Old Testament is just an example.

It's just a little window of the judgment that's still coming. And that should seriously give us pause and sober us up. Because this story tells us that God's judgment will always eventually come down on a sinful society.

No human depravity will get away with what it's doing, flouting God's laws and ignoring him and totally going against his will for this world. Nobody will get away with that.

[18 : 31] No society will get away with that. God's judgment will come down. It's just a matter of time. And so this is a warning of the judgment that is heading to this world.

God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice, Paul tells the Athenians. And nothing is going to stop that. Nothing. You know, it's funny.

In the last chapter, if you were here last Sunday and if you were at growth group, we read about Abraham. God is telling Abraham, okay, by the way, this is what these angels are doing here.

This is what I'm going to do. And Abraham tries to stop it. Out of good motives. He tries to stop God's judgment. And even he can't.

Even the man, the one man that is closest to God on this earth can't stop the judgment from coming. How much less can we stop it? And so we come to the next major question of this story.

[19 : 31] And that is, how can you make sure you are on the right side of God when that happens? If that judgment is inevitable and it's coming, and if this is the kind of God we're dealing with, well, then that is the most important question we could ever ask ourselves.

How can we escape God's judgment? And that's what this story also teaches us, thankfully. Because Lot here is saved. Lot is seen as a bumbling fool who is still saved.

And I think of all the characters, he's the one we can relate to, right? And Lot is saved, interestingly enough, through no work of his own here.

Throughout the story, he's presented as a less than admirable man. Offering his daughters to the mob. Selfishly asking the angels to spare one sinful city so that he could still go on enjoying the benefits of urban life.

And then ending off the story, drunk as a skunk, committing shameful acts in a cave. Not the best example to follow, right? And so we've got to ask, why go to all this trouble to save Lot?

[20 : 39] Was it because of his hospitality to the angels? No, actually not. We're told, in verse 29, why he was saved, and it had nothing to do with him.

Have a look. When God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham and brought Lot out of the catastrophe. That's a bit surprising.

You would expect it to say, When God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Lot. And brought him out of the catastrophe.

But it doesn't say that. It says he remembered Abraham, and that's the point. He rescued Lot, not because of Lot, or anything in Lot, or anything that Lot did.

He rescued Lot because of Abraham, his uncle. So remember last time we came across this phrase, God remembered so-and-so? Do you remember where that was? Genesis 8, verse 1.

[21 : 37] I think it's 8, verse 1. I'm just off the top of my head. God remembered Noah. Remember the flood story? God remembered Noah. And you'll remember if you were here, that remember, sorry, I've said that word remember a lot, that that word, in the Bible, it doesn't mean to recall something previously forgotten.

It actually means to act in line with the promise that you've made. Lot was rescued in this story because of God's covenant with Abraham.

And the fact that Abraham had asked God to spare Lot. And that's it. That's the only reason Lot got out of this. Do you see that? It's very important to see that because it teaches us something about how God saves people from his judgment.

Lot was saved for no other reason than because of his association with the covenant. That alone is what saved Lot.

And that is a great comfort for any of us who are less than perfect. And who make mistakes like Lot did.

[22 : 48] If it was up to us to live in such a way as to merit salvation from God's judgment, none of us would be saved. But in this story, we're reminded that being righteous, which means being on the right side of God, being in the right with God, being righteous, has got nothing to do with our personal properties.

Isn't that a relief? If you look at yourself? Rather, being righteous has everything to do with our connection to the covenant that God made with Abraham thousands of years ago.

And that is it. That is the only way and will ever only be the only way that God has chosen to save people and bring them out of the curse and bring them out of his wrath and into salvation through that covenant that he made with Abraham in Genesis chapter 12.

And that's a unique teaching of Christianity. You'll find that nowhere else in any other religion. The unique teaching of what the Bible actually presents is that you can be saved from God's judgment that will fall on this world not through your works but through your connection to God's covenant of salvation.

And so the question shouldn't be well, what must we do to be saved? In fact, the rich young ruler asked Jesus that question, didn't he?

[24 : 19] And the end of that story, the moral of that story, Jesus said, well, follow me. And he couldn't because he had too much connection to this world, too much wealth. So Jesus was saying, listen, you've got to be connected to me if you're going to be saved.

And that is the unique teaching of Christianity. The question is, how do we, all these years later, how do we have a connection?

How do we make sure we're connected with God's saving covenant that he made with Abraham? Well, through the Lord Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham. And through being part of the covenant community and taking part in the covenant science.

You see, that's why Jesus came. That's why what we're going to celebrate later in the Lord's Supper is so vital. And as John said earlier, everything we do is about Jesus.

Because he is the only way you can be connected with that saving covenant God made with Abraham. Because he is the only person who came to die for your sins so that you can enter into that covenant, that you can be made righteous in God's sight.

[25 : 31] Later, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we'll remember Jesus said, this cup is the new covenant of my blood. And so partaking in this, in faith, means membership in that covenant, connection with that covenant.

And that is vital because it's only when we're in this covenant that we can be saved. And that is what the whole Bible story tells us. But Jesus didn't only die for our sins to bring us into that saving covenant.

He also rose again and is right now interceding on behalf of his people. Just like Abraham was interceding for Lot when Lot was in that city oblivious to it.

And that's the only reason Lot was saved. And so we, like Lot, had an intercessor, we also have an intercessor today.

The Son of God. A much better intercessor than Abraham ever was. Because God will not refuse to listen to his own son as he intercedes for his people. And we can be sure of that if we're in his covenant, that he is interceding for us.

[26 : 45] Question, is he interceding for you? Does he know you? Are you one of his people? Have you repented and put your faith in him?

And do you name him as your Lord? Because if not, there is no other way to escape the judgment that is coming. But if so, if you have come under his protection and you are following him today into eternal life, then there's one more lesson that the story teaches you.

And it is a warning. Don't look back. Verse 17. As soon as they had brought them out, one of them, these are the angels, 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. Go down to verse 26. But Lot's wife looked back.

And she became a pillar of salt. Okay, what's the deal with the pillar of salt? I don't know. I even had to email Michiel, our resident doctor of chemistry, to ask him any significance to salt.

[28 : 06] I've been scratching my head this week about salt. but, you know, I've been doing reading and after my reading I've concluded that it's probably, the salt, the significance of it, is probably a sign of the desolation of being cut off from the covenant protection of God.

Because a land in the Old Testament, a land that was covered in salt was a land of desolation. It was a land without life. And so this is most likely an indicator that Lot's wife, by looking back longingly at her home, could not disconnect from it.

She couldn't disconnect from that land of desolation and so she shared its fate and became desolate herself in the most extreme way. And so by looking back, by remaining connected to what was being destroyed, she forsook her place in God's covenant protection.

It's like if you could picture, just use your imagination for a second, and picture an imaginary bubble of protection with which God keeps his judgment from his covenant people, right?

Because that's essentially what's going on. God has a covenant people on earth, his wrath is going to come down, but he's protecting certain people. So imagine it's like this bubble of protection that protects his people from his judgment.

[29 : 35] And today, as we come to church, as we do this, and we sit under his word and we believe it and we partake in the sacraments of the covenant and we pray for each other, those are called the means of grace because they are the bubble of protection that God uses to keep his people firmly safe and in the covenant.

So now imagine this bubble of protection is around Lot's family as they flee up the hills from his judgment and this raining sulfur is burning down. And this bubble of protection kind of follows them as they go up the hill, but then Lot's wife stops.

She looks back, she turns around, almost drawn back to the lifestyle that she knows. But in doing so, she unwittingly steps out of that bubble of protection and the moment she does, she joins her fate to the fate of Sodom.

And that is why Jesus tells his disciples in one of the shortest verses in the Bible, remember Lot's wife. Luke 17 verse 32.

That's all it says. And then Jesus elaborates in the next verse, whoever tries to keep their life will lose it. But whoever loses their life will preserve it.

[30 : 56] Now it's interesting, John read this passage for us earlier from Luke 17 and it's speaking in the context of coming judgment from God. The immediate context was the judgment of Jerusalem that happened about 50, 40 years later in AD 70.

So if you look at Luke 21, later on Jesus explains what's going to happen then talking about this invasion of the Romans into Jerusalem, they will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations.

Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. Jerusalem's still being trampled on by the Gentiles, by the way.

The nations, those outside of the covenant where the temple used to stand is a giant mosque. And so, you know, what's happening today is a fulfillment of what Jesus said.

So whatever else he says, we've got to take seriously because that judgment in AD 70 that he was warning his disciples about was only a foretaste of the final judgment to come.

[32 : 09] It was one of those foretastes that God is giving us throughout history of the final judgment that is on its way. And he makes this quite clear when he talks about that final judgment later on.

He says, they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory when these things begin to take place. Stand up and lift your heads because your redemption is drawing near.

And so, the judgment of Jerusalem, like the flood, like Sodom, was a foretaste of the final judgment that's going to happen when Jesus comes to return to this earth to judge and no one will be able to ignore it.

Everyone will see it. And Jesus is warning his disciples of this and telling them how to prepare for that day, how to prepare for that day in the future.

And he says, to do that, to prepare for that day, you must be waiting expectantly for him and you'll only do that if you remember Lot's wife. So, Jesus is telling his disciples they'll only be ready for his return if they make sure they're not clinging to this world and what it can give and looking back and staying connected to this world and this society.

[33 : 24] You've all heard about the monkey trap, haven't you? Hunters used to trap monkeys with jars. Have you heard about this? They used to put a fruit in a jar and the monkey would reach his hand but the opening to the jar would only be as big as his empty hand.

He would reach his hand down to this jar, grab the fruit and try to take his hand out but it would get stuck and the interesting thing is this actually worked to trap monkeys because they just didn't want to let go of this fruit and so the hunter would eventually come and get them because they refused to let go of the fruit.

Well, Satan plays the same tricks by getting us to fall in love with what this world can give us and grab on it and refuse to let it go. We refuse to let our money go in order to give to the work of God and follow Jesus and what he calls us to do.

That was exactly the rich young ruler's problem. He couldn't follow Jesus because he had too much money and so he had too much connection to this world. Money is one of those things. It's not evil in itself and it can be used for great things, for God's purposes but it is one of the things that if it's misused connects us, glues us to this world and this society because money is not going to help in the world to come.

So the more money you've got here, the more you'll want to try and get what this world can give you. So we often refuse to give up our resources for Jesus or we refuse to just let Jesus change our plans.

[34 : 56] No, I've got my plan of what I want to do with my life, my ambitions, what I want to achieve for myself to make my name great. Babel, again. And so we refuse to change our plans because of all our ambitions in this world or we refuse to risk our reputation for Jesus.

Talking to our work colleagues and our family about Jesus because it'll rock the boat, it'll upset them like Lot. Didn't want to upset his neighbors by telling them the truth.

But you see, if you hold too tightly to those things and if you identify too strongly with this world and pursue what this world pursues will then, mark my words, you will share its fate.

If you want what it can give you, by all means, go after it. But you will end up in the same place that this world ends up. And that's what Paul means in 2 Corinthians 6 when he warns.

And he says, do not be yoked together or partner with those who do not believe. He says, come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. That's instructions to Christians.

[36 : 11] Do not partner together, be yoked together and follow the same direction as those who do not believe, those who are destined for judgment if they're not saved. Come out from them and be separate.

Don't share the values of this world or you will end up like this world. That's what the story of Sodom and Lot's wife teaches us. Don't have a peace treaty with your sin and think that certain behavior is fine because society approves.

Majority doesn't rule by the way. God rules alone. And so don't go along with popular opinion when the majority of the world calls good evil and evil good, which they're doing now.

Don't nod your head and agree and like posts that promote things that you know is against God's will. God's will.

Because everyone around you agrees with it and it has festivals celebrating it so it must be fine. No, it's not. Pursue sexual purity in your own life and in your thoughts.

[37 : 17] That's where it starts. Guard what your eyes look at. Guard what websites you visit. Guard what your mind thinks about thinks about at work or when you're out on the street and you're looking.

Guard your eyes. Guard your mind. Guard your heart because sexual depravity all too easily infects us and it is the taproot of all other kinds of sins in your life.

Separate yourself from the sinful society that is overdue for judgment and pursue holiness befitting of a child of God in how you live, in what you say, in what you think about and in what you do behind closed doors.

Even if you're laughed at and called old-fashioned and your warnings of judgment fall on deaf ears and people chuckle, keep thinking back to Sodom.

Keep thinking back to this story. Well, let me read you as we close what Jude says in his letter. He also talks about Sodom and Gomorrah and just after talking about that judgment, listen to how he concludes from Jude verse 18.

[38 : 38] He says, In the last times there will be scoffers who follow their own ungodly desires. Whoa. That was 2,000 years ago and he's talking about today, isn't he?

In the last days. The last times. There will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires. And then he goes on, verse 20. But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Be merciful to those who doubt. Save others by snatching them from the fire. To others show mercy mixed with fear, hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

And so let's take that on board as we read this story of Sodom. Let's strive to be people set apart from the values of this world and through bold proclamation of the truth of Scripture, especially now as we enter the Christmas season where there is so much more opportunity to talk about Jesus.

Let us boldly do that and be unashamed to talk about Jesus so that we might save people by snatching them from the fire to come.

[40 : 04] Shall we pray? Lord God, we just come humbly before you. Thank you for this reminder that you are not a fluffy God.

You are the judge of all the universe and we should rightfully fear you. Thank you, Lord, that you have given us a covenant that we can know your mercy and be assured of your salvation from your wrath.

Help us, Lord, to live as your covenant people. Help us to think of the ways that we so often in our own lives get attached, too attached to this world that veers us away from following Jesus, our only hope of salvation, and help us to put off those things, Lord.

Help us to not toe the line to what society wants, but to always do what you want and to pursue your will and give us opportunities in this coming season as we start our Christmas series and events.

Lord, give us a, we actually thank you for this warning right at the end of our Genesis series for this year and we thank you that as we head into this Christmas season we have a very real reminder of the fate of those who are not saved.

[41 : 26] Help us, Lord, to be mobilized to open our mouths and to do what we can as this church to bring people to the knowledge of salvation and through our efforts in the coming month would you save many.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.