

23. The Church's Mission to the World (2007)

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[0 : 00] Well, do turn with me, if you would, to the passage we read in Genesis chapter 19. And as we do that, let's pray. Heavenly Father, these are dark and difficult words we've read this morning in your word.

Help us, we pray, to see in them your truth and your light, and to humble ourselves before you. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

There is only one gospel, and there's only ever been one gospel. And the gospel that Paul tells us, which was preached in advance to Abraham, is the same unchanging, unrelenting message that's repeated on every page of Scripture from beginning to end.

And it's summed up, really, in the words that we began our service with today, from Revelation 14, verse 6. The words of the angel, who we're told has an eternal gospel to proclaim to every creature on earth.

Fear God, says the angel, and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him, who made heaven and earth and sea and springs of water.

[1 : 18] And Genesis chapter 19 is preserved for us in Scripture to give us one of the most vivid and dramatic pictures imaginable of what the true gospel of God is really all about.

It tells us, absolutely unmistakably, what is the church's abiding message to this world, whether in Abraham's day, or in Jesus' day, or in our own day.

It tells us that the Christian gospel is not an interesting offer from God to be pondered and discussed. No. It's an urgent command to be obeyed without any delay, lest unimaginable disaster overtake you.

The abiding message of the church to the world is this. Flee from the wrath to come. That was John the Baptist's words. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That's Jesus' words.

Save yourselves from this crooked generation. That's Peter on the day of Pentecost. Or, in the words of the angelic messengers here in Genesis chapter 19, up, escape, lest you be swept away.

[2 : 37] That's a very, very solemn chapter, isn't it? The sort of chapter that if one wasn't going through the story of Genesis, you certainly wouldn't choose. But we've got to take it seriously, because as we'll see, God's prophets and his apostles and Jesus himself all take this story very seriously indeed.

So let's look then at what it tells us about the abiding message that God has given to his church for the world. If you look at these verses, you'll see the narrative falls into three sections. First of all, verses 1 to 11 give an ample demonstration of Sodom's wickedness.

Then verses 12 to 22 describe an astonishing deliverance from Sodom's wickedness. And then verses 23 to 29 confirm an abiding destruction for Sodom's wickedness.

So we're going to look at what the text says, and then we'll think about the lessons that the Bible itself demands that we should draw by way of unmistakable implication of everything that this story teaches us.

First then, let's look at verses 1 to 11 and the ample demonstration of Sodom's wickedness. This first section of the story serves to display the justice of God, the judge of all the earth, who, as Abraham tells us, must and will act always only with absolute justice.

[4 : 04] Because it demonstrates for us the appalling depravity of a society and of a culture that has become utterly and irredeemably evil in God's sight. Verses 1 to 3 begin with a righteous man in an evil city.

It's very like the beginning of chapter 18, isn't it? The visitors approach, just as they had to Abraham. But Abraham's nephew, Lot, is not sitting at the door of a tent. He's abandoned the life of the sojourner in the exile.

Back in chapter 13, you remember, we're told he pitched his tent towards Sodom. But now, he's got real estate in Sodom, says verse 3. And it appears he's got a position of standing in the city.

The city gate is where the elders would meet to discuss policy and to make judgments. It was the city chambers of the day, if you like. So Lot has become a senior counsellor in Sodom.

He's a bailey. Maybe he'd cashed in on Abraham's kudos when Abraham was the saviour of these five cities back in chapter 14. Who knows?

[5 : 09] But at any rate, we see Lot now fully integrated into Sodom's society. And yet, he's obviously not entirely comfortable there either. He doesn't really belong in a place like this, does he?

Apostle Peter tells us that plainly in 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 7. He says he was a righteous man. He was greatly distressed by the wickedness all around him in Sodom, the things that he heard, the things that he saw.

And if you look at verse 3, we can see that Lot is clearly a little agitated. The strangers say they want to sleep in the city square. Well, after all, it was warm and pleasant.

They'd be safe, surely, inside the walls of a city, from any bandits, from any wild animals. But no, Lot won't have it. He pressed them strongly. He insisted that they come into his house for safety.

And so, they go with him and they have a meal. Why this sense of unease? Why this urgency?

Well, verses 4 to 8 make it very plain why Lot had good reason to be uneasy, don't they?

[6 : 17] For all Lot's haste to get these men out of sight and into his house, it wasn't enough. Word had got out. Two handsome, quality men had come into the town and they were lodging with Lot.

And such was the appalling depravity of this place that verse 4 tells us the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the very last man, they form a mob outside the door intent on violent homosexual gang rape.

Bring them out, they say, that we may know them. The New International Version is quite correct to translate that as bring them out that we might have sex with them.

That's plain from verse 8, where Lot speaks of his two daughters, likewise, who have not known any man, they're virgins. It's an appalling scene. It's not just that the Bible always condemns homosexual practice, whether Old Testament or New Testament, utterly consistent.

But what we're reading here is far worse than that. It's gang rape. Something abhorrent to every single one of the ancient oriental cultures around, not just Israel.

[7 : 32] What the writer is telling us is that here is ample demonstration of what we read back in chapter 18, verse 20, when God said, the outcry against Sodom is so great that it's come up to my ears.

And it's solemn proof too, isn't it, that what Abraham had hoped for and prayed for was an illusion. What had Abraham sought? Just ten righteous men. Only ten in the whole city.

And God would save the place. But what's the reality? Look at verse 4 again. All the men, young and old, to the very last man.

Utterly flagrant in their wickedness. It's just as Paul quotes the psalmist, isn't it, in Romans chapter 3, where he says, none is righteous. No, not one.

There is no fear of God before their eyes. And that's why, as Paul also says, in the very opening words of what he calls the gospel of God, he says, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

[8 : 49] When you go home, read the rest of the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. You'll see it's all of a piece with Genesis chapter 19. There's no question of the horror of this place, Sodom, is there?

The whole atmosphere is one of rank evil. And in that regard, surely we've got to concede that Lot is very brave in verse 6, isn't he? He goes out to face this mob, to protect his guests.

He knows just how serious they are. This is absolutely no joke. It's deadly danger. Which is why he's reduced to this awful, awful alternative of throwing his two daughters to them to satisfy their lust.

Isn't it terrible? The Lord had got himself into a situation where the only choices open to him were bad ones, terrible ones. That is what happens sometimes, isn't it?

When believers allow themselves to be carried along to places they know they're not at home in, they don't belong, yet they acquiesce in them. Isn't that so? It's appalling, isn't it?

[9 : 55] When you read the end of the story about Lot and his daughters and what happens, you can't help wondering if from that moment they lost all respect for their father. How could they not be disgusted?

How could they not feel utterly betrayed? It's terrible. Maybe Lot was hoping that his future son-in-law, son-in-laws, sons-in-law rather, they must have been in the crowd, mustn't they, if every last man in Sodom was there?

Maybe he was hoping that they would exercise some restraint on the mob when they saw their fiancées being brought out. We don't know. Either way, it's a pretty dreadful business.

In any case, it was all to no avail. Verses 9 to 11 just further demonstrate the absolute rampancy of the evil. Lot pleads with them not to act so wickedly, he says in verse 8.

But far from bringing them to repentance, they're just provoked all the more. How dare you lecture us, they say. We'll deal worse with you than with them.

[11 : 01] Hard to imagine what that might be, isn't it? And Lot himself is saved only by the supernatural intervention of the angels now revealed for who they truly are. And yet, verse 11 tells us that even when the people were struck with blindness, probably some dazzling light to confuse them, even then, such is the frenzy of their sin that they still go on groping for the door, refusing to heed God's intimations of judgment and rather openly raging against everything that is just and holy and good.

It's a fearful picture, isn't it? Of the sinfulness of sin. Not just pursuing sinful and horrible lusts, but pride and persistence and sheer celebration in it.

But that's not just ancient Sodom, is it? That's humanity. That's human societies all through history. It's still today. It's what Paul says in Romans 1. Though they know God's decree, they not only do evil, but they give approval to those who do. That's the world, isn't it?

God gave every chance for Sodom to be seen in its best light. You notice that? The angels assume the best, don't they? They can stay quite safely out in the open in the square.

[12 : 29] And Lot does everything he can to restrain the evil in the city, and yet it's all to no avail. There's nothing but rank depravity and outright wickedness.

And it would have been worse still, wouldn't it? If it hadn't been for God's restraint by striking these men blind. And that's always so in the world. We don't realize it.

But our world would be far, far worse without God's merciful hand of restraint on it most of the time.

We only see glimpses, you know, of what our world could be like all the time when God lifts his restraining hand sometimes to expose evil for what it really is and to remind us how terrible sin is lest we forget how deep the curses that humankind have brought upon the world.

But just as here in Sodom, without the restraining hand of God's angels on this world, this world would not last another day before destroying itself. That's the truth.

Well, this is surely one of the darkest passages of Scripture, although it's far from unique. I don't want to linger on this story any longer really, but it is here for a purpose, isn't it?

[13 : 45] Ample demonstration of the sheer evil of these cities and therefore the unquestionable justice of God in destroying them, as he did.

The judge of all the earth will and always will do right. And when God's sword of judgment does fall, it's never capricious, it's never hasty, it's never, ever unrighteous.

That was very important, wasn't it, for Israel to know, as Moses wrote these things for them, as they would think about their role witnessing God's future judgments against the Canaanite cities in the land.

Only when God has finally weighed up the sin of a place will it be judged. Remember he'd said that to Abraham back in Genesis 15.

Only when the sins of the Amorites have reached their full course would Israel enter into the land on a mission of justice, not on a mission of imperialism. Moses warned them later on in Deuteronomy chapter 9 very clearly, not because of your righteousness are you going to possess the land, but because of the wickedness of those nations the Lord your God is driving out from before you.

[15 : 09] And to confirm the promises to the patriarchs. God, you see, doesn't want his people to get any false ideas about their own superiority or to have any wrong ideas about false favoritism on their part.

You see, he's a God of absolute justice. He wants his people to know that. It's important for us to remember too, isn't it? Sometimes we question God, don't we?

Because we find his justice hard. God, how can God punish anyone? How can God punish anyone forever? It seems so unfair. But no, God is just.

And he will be shown to be just. In the end, just as here, there will be ample and abundant demonstration of the sinfulness and the wickedness that demands his judgment.

The judge of all the earth is just and he does justly. And he will be demonstrated to be just and only just in the judgment that he brings on all human sin and wickedness.

[16:14] And that's the church's abiding message to the world because it's the Bible's consistent message, God's consistent message to the world. But of course, it's not the whole story because God is also merciful and the next section in verses 12 to 22 describes, doesn't it, an astonishing deliverance from Sodom's wickedness.

These verses display the extraordinary and absolute mercy of God on a reluctant lot who has to be dragged out of the conflagration and brought to safety. C.S. Lewis, you know, once described his conversion from atheism and he said he must have been the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.

But surely what we have here in Lot's deliverance is the most reluctant convert ever. And yet, in the sorry picture of Lot, Derek Kidner, I think, rightly says that all believers have good reason to see ourselves and our own salvation in the hands of God's sheer sovereign grace and mercy.

Isn't that right? He rescues from the gaping jaws of judgment but notice the pattern of God's mercy in this great deliverance.

There's both gospel proclamation and gospel propulsion. Salvation is of God and of God alone from first to last and this is an absolute example of it.

[17:43] It's sheer sovereign mercy that saves Lot, isn't it? Verses 12 to 13 proclaim the gospel message, don't they? Judgment is coming. It can't be averted.

The outcry is so great that the Lord must destroy this place. You see, God's grace and his love warns. It proclaims before it happens that judgment is coming.

That's the gospel Jesus preached. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand before it's too late.

It's the apostolic message all the way through. Do you remember Paul in Athens? The time of ignorance God overlooked but now he commands all people everywhere to repent because he has fixed the day on which he will judge the world in justice by the man he has appointed, Jesus Christ. And of this he has given assurance by raising him from the dead. God's grace and his mercy issues in proclamation, warning of God's coming wrath and an urgent command to respond.

It's all through this passage. Look at verse 12. Get out before it's too late. Verse 14. Up. Get out of this place. Verse 15. Up. Lest you be swept away.

[18:59] Verse 17. Escape for your life. Again, escape to the hills or you'll be swept away. Verse 22. Escape there quickly. Do you see? Again and again comes God's gracious warning.

Flee from the wrath to come. Do you see how urgent the eternal gospel message is? And yet how gracious.

Even at this late stage there's mercy offered, isn't there, to Lot's extended family. Look at verse 12. Sons, daughters, sons-in-law, anyone you have in this city can see the warning.

We don't know if that means that Lot had other daughters-in-law as well as these ones still at home or whether it was just the two prospective son-in-laws that he was talking about. But either way, what grace!

These men had all been in that vile mob battering down the door. But Lot goes out and pleads with them a warning, doesn't he? He proclaims the gospel to them. Reminds you of Jesus, doesn't it?

[20:06] Even in the Last Supper, pleading and offering mercy to Judas. Yet as it was there, so it is here. Verse 14.

They just thought it was a hilarious joke. Judgment coming? God's wrath? Punishment for sin? Don't expect us to believe that. What a joke!

Very familiar, isn't it? The world doesn't change at all. There'll be no judgment. God can't touch us. There is a God.

God, he thinks he can, let him bring it on. See if we care. It's just the same today, isn't it? People think it's an absolute joke. As it was in the first century.

And Peter, you'll remember in his second letter, warns us and says, people will always scoff, saying, where's that coming? Judgment. But he says, they forget, don't they? They forget, deliberately, the history of the world and the real and the terrible judgments that God has brought in

the past.

[21 : 09] These things happened as warnings about a judgment far, far worse that's still to come. But alas, we read here that Lot's extended family, they all totally ignore the warning.

It's very telling, isn't it? Maybe it tells us something about Lot as well. Haven't they seen anything in this man, in Lot, in his home, in his personal testimony, in his witness?

Was there nothing that they saw in him and his life to suggest to them that God was actually real? That God was to be taken seriously? Alas, it seems not.

It's tragic, isn't it? When a Christian believer may get a chance to bear witness to the truth of the gospel, but, well, their life has just slipped so far from the real life of godliness and Christian faith that, well, their words just don't count for anything.

So, the grace and mercy in the proclamation of the saving message goes largely unheard. Even, it seems, in Lot's own house. It's extraordinary by himself and his two daughters.

[22 : 18] They have to be forced into being delivered, don't they? God's grace literally then has to propel them out of Sodom. Look at verse 15. The crack of dawn comes, the very last moment and it seems as though Lot's still asleep, hoping it's all just going to be a bad dream.

Up, says the angel. Save yourself from this twisted generation. But, verse 16, he lingered. Scarcely believable, isn't it?

Until you realize, of course, just how powerful the hold of sin is on the hearts of men and women, in our own hearts. Lot lingers in the face of God's grace and they have to be propelled out, dragged, one in each of the angels' hands, says verse 16, the Lord being merciful to him.

And even then, verse 18 says, having lingered in the face of God's grace, he now seeks to limit the extent of God's merciful provision. Oh no, my lords, I can't do it.

I don't want to go to the hills. I don't want to go to the land of promise where Abraham lives. I don't want the whole package, the life of faith with God's people. Now let me just go to this little place.

[23 : 32] Can't you spare it? Can't I just go and live a compromised life there and be safe? Pitiful, isn't it? Not even brimstone will make a pilgrim of him, says Derek Kidner.

He must have his little Sodom again for life to be supportable. Well, the New Testament tells us that there are Christians just like that, aren't there?

Whose lives in the end will bear precious little or virtually no fruit for Jesus Christ and therefore they will lose out in the world to come even though they themselves are saved as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3 but only as through fire just like Lot dragged to deliverance.

But for all that don't miss the astonishing deliverance that we see here. Don't miss God's extraordinary mercy and patience for this pathetic man Lot.

It's like Amos put it. He's a brand plucked from the burning. Yet that's what the whole Bible tells us every single Christian believer is, isn't it?

[24 : 42] Sinner saved from the wrath of God by the sheer grace of God the Lord being merciful to him. There's surely no more powerful picture anywhere in Scripture of the free unmerited grace and mercy of God as there is in these verses is there?

Can't think of one. The Lord being merciful to him. He proclaimed his grace as a warning about coming judgment and then he propelled him along with his families against all his hesitation and dragged him to safety.

mercy. You were children of wrath says Paul to the Ephesian church but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our transgressions made us alive with Christ by grace you have been saved.

This is not your doing it's the gift of God not as a result of works that no one no one may boast an astonishing deliverance from wrath and judgment by the sheer mercy of grace of God and that's the unchanging gospel isn't it?

Well the last section insists that we should never forget that the eternal gospel will not hide the dreadful reality of the wrath of God because verses 13 to 29 press home don't they the historical fact of the abiding destruction of Sodom's wickedness Sodom was given every opportunity to avoid this terrible end it had lots influence such as it was but to no avail it had been saved remember once before by Abraham himself and God had refused to judge this place simply on hearsay insisted on going to see but his message just confirmed the worst the heart hadn't been told him and yet even then opportunities to repent were given and once again they were spurned bring it on they said God's judgment is just a joke and so just like before the flood

[27 : 07] God sees that he must judge and he will judge and he does fearfully and completely and these verses can leave us in no doubt can they that God's wrath against sin is real and it's terrible there's nothing remotely metaphorical is there about verse 24 no doubt all the natural elements of the region gave the immediate means the volcanic activity the bitumen pits the salt the sulfur but verse 24 leaves us in no doubt this is God's doing the Lord rained down fire and sulfur nor is it somehow impersonal as though it was some kind of automatic response to human sin it couldn't be described in more personal terms look at it the Lord rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven the powerful personal righteous anger the wrath of God that is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness that's what the eternal gospel of God proclaims according to

Paul in Romans 1 and according to Moses here in Genesis 19 and according to all the scriptures notice its scope verse 25 it's universal he overthrew all the cities the valley all the inhabitants even the vegetation but it's not indiscriminate individual isn't it verse 26 Lot's wife wasn't just engulfed at random because she looked back that is she turned back in her heart to cling to the corrupt world of Sodom even in its day of judgment and destruction having received the knowledge of the truth she deliberately turned back and chose lies and sin so that in the words of the New Testament in Hebrews 10 there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin but only a fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living

God says the New Testament gospel God will not be mocked and so Lot's wife was engulfed by the fire and the sulfur and the salt raining down and when Abraham went back to see the place where he had interceded he looked verse 28 and behold the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace it was an abiding destruction for centuries for millennia even to today the apostle Jude says that these cities serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire Josephus the Jewish historian of the first century said vestiges of the divine fire can still be seen there and Philo another Jewish contemporary says ruins cinders brimstone smoke and murky flames continue to rise from the ground and even today some of you have been there you've seen the whole environs of the Dead Sea are a sulfurous devastation a place that once remember

Genesis 13 tells us was well watered beautiful place like the garden of the Lord a standing witness both of the shocking wickedness in the hearts of proud and unrepentant men and also therefore the terrifying reality of the wrath of a holy God so there's the story of Sodom's end it's two sides ample demonstration of Sodom's wickedness and God's righteousness and therefore the abiding destruction by God's just wrath against evil and yet at the very heart of the story an astonishing deliverance through the amazing mercy of God through the sovereign proclamation and also the sovereign propulsion of the message of the eternal gospel a word that says fear God and give him glory for the hour of his judgment has come well what are we to learn from all of this well the bible itself tells us the significance of this story tells us explicitly that this story's message is the church's abiding message to the world and that message of the gospel is a warning because love warns it warns against judgment it urges action before it's too late firstly it's a warning to the world it's a warning to societies that have forgotten

God and scorn his ways and refuse to repent it's a warning that God will not stay his wrath forever he will investigate he will always be utterly just but where communities and cities and nations and empires persistently flout his laws and scorn his ways and refuse his heralds of mercy those who seek to limit the evil who try to restore righteousness in public morality in medical ethics in sexual behavior and in spiritual loyalty and these things are ignored there will come a time when as verse 13 says the outcry against its people becomes so great that the Lord will bring his hand of judgment in time and in history just as he did here in Sodom the Bible makes that quite clear to become like Sodom became a byword for God's judgment on the nations and his destruction of empires whose evil became so great the

[32 : 59] Lord would tolerate it on earth no longer Babylon and Edom and Moab all of these are marked out by the prophets just like Sodom Isaiah says Babylon the glory of kingdoms the splendor and pomp of the chaldeans will be like Sodom and Gomorrah in the day God overthrew them time is close at hand and its days will not be prolonged so it was you can read it in the history books and likewise the Persians and the Greeks and the Romans and many other empires through history have become just like Sodom not necessarily in exactly the same way but destroyed their foundations removed expunged by God that means that we need to pay heed doesn't it in the 21st century history hasn't stopped it's interesting that Ezekiel chapter 16 tells us that in Sodom the

decline all began with a society that became proud indulgent sick with prosperous ease while it exploited the most needy and became degenerate in its behavior well we in the

West today need to heed the warning don't we of the eternal gospel for societies like that especially in a week when our government has just passed laws favoring the production of hybrid embryos and making fetuses just for spare parts for others and abandoning the conception that fatherhood has any relevance in bringing up children I read in one of our newspapers that this was a week which was quotes a great victory for progress well that's not what God thinks very sobering isn't it especially when you add it to the record of this government which has passed more laws directly flouting biblical sexual morality than any other government in the history of these islands well this chapter is a sobering warning to the world second it's a sobering warning also to the church to God's own people where the church abandons God's truth and follows the ways and thinking of the world as it has often done then she is not to presume special stature judgment begins says the Bible with the house of God and repeatedly in the prophets God's people are likened to Sodom and said to be worse than Sodom Israel proclaimed that by Isaiah and Ezekiel and Jeremiah and Amos they all accuse Israel of exactly these things even the prophets of Jerusalem says Jeremiah the clergy have become worse than the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah to me Moses himself warns Israel that God will overthrow their land in exactly the way he did with Sodom and Gomorrah if they abandon his covenant if they presume upon his grace if they think that because they're God's chosen people they can ignore God's ways and do as they please and the Lord Jesus warns his people his church in exactly those terms doesn't he you read the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 1 to 3 I know your ways says Jesus it comes up to my ears the outcry and if you won't repent

I will come against you and I'll remove your lampstand forever and history tells us doesn't it that most of those churches were wiped out they're not there in modern day Turkey today you hardly find a believer in that land it's a warning this chapter to the church not to become proud and presumptuous not to think that God will be mocked that his ways can be abandoned and scorned and that he'll simply smile benignly on our sin because we call ourselves the Christian church many denominations today seem to think they can do exactly that don't they especially ironically with a promotion of homosexual practice many other direct defiances against God's word and his ways not so hear the word of the eternal gospel fear God and give him glory for the hour of his judgment has come his judgments are without prejudice so don't think just because you call yourself a historical church or an established church or a national church or an evangelical church for that matter don't think that you can fly at almighty

God never it's to his church that God says through the prophets for the look on their faces bears witness against them they proclaim their sin like Sodom they do not hide it woe to them Isaiah 3 verse 9 this passage is a warning to the nations but it's also a warning to the church but thirdly and above all it's a warning isn't it to every human being something far far worse than the destruction of Sodom because what we see here was just a temple judgment a physical destruction of a city and time and history but the apostle Peter tells us absolutely plainly that this is but an example of what is to happen to the ungodly on the day of eternal judgment that's still to come for every person who's ever lived in this world who are the ungodly who will be condemned like that well it will be those plain and simple who refuse and reject the same eternal gospel who resist the only way of escape which is heeding the warning of

[38 : 52] God's judgment and embracing the sheer mercy of God in the deliverance that he has accomplished for us in Jesus Christ his son Jesus himself tells us that absolutely plainly you read Matthew chapter 11 he denounces the citizens of Galilee to whom he had gone who heard his words who saw his works and yet perversely still refused to obey his gospel refused to worship him this is what he says to them it will be more terrible for them than it will be for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment it's pretty frightening isn't it does it shock you maybe it does wonder if you knew that it's the Lord Jesus Christ more than any other person in the whole New Testament who talks about hell and judgment the most why do you think that is I'll tell you why it's because the Lord Jesus Christ loves more than any other has ever loved he loves people loves men and women and boys and girls and love warns warns about judgment to come and it proclaims the abiding gospel message repent escape flee save yourselves from the wrath to come

Jesus shouts to a complacent world his word of loving warning you can read it yourself in Luke chapter 17 he says this just as it was in the days of lot when people were living and going about

their business without a care in the world so it will be but the Lord rained down fire and sulfur from heaven and destroyed them all so it will be on the day the son of man is revealed says Jesus so remember Lot's wife whoever seeks to preserve his life by clinging to the worthless things of this world will lose it just as she did but whoever loses his life says Jesus that is the one who heeds the warning of the eternal gospel who flees to the mercy of Christ no matter what must be left behind of the things the world values that one will be saved eternally certainly how can you be sure of that or just look at the very last verse verse 29 don't miss that wonderful verse because that verse too is the eternal gospel of God was Lot saved on his own account was he regarded as righteous Lot for his own merits well you can't read this story and think that can you of course not no this verse tells us the truth we've seen him propelled out of Sodom's destruction by the sheer mercy of God but verse 29 shows us why doesn't it it was all because and only because he had a priestly intercessor with God no other reason God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the destruction to the place of safety isn't that astonishing and you see the gospel warns us all as it warned Lot of a terrible judgment to come but a warning alone isn't enough is it we can't save ourselves for anything like Lot we don't even have the inclination Lot needed total rescue and it came his rescue entirely entirely on account of another

God remembered Abraham and saved Lot that means we too need an intercessor doesn't it a high priest far greater than Abraham one who can save to the utmost not just from a destruction of a city but from the terrible judgment to come but we have one whoever lives says the Bible to make intercession for us Jesus Christ the Son of God himself and he said this listen in John 17 he said this to God his father I am praying for them for all of those you've given me you say if Jesus is interceding for you then you're safe aren't you because it's Jesus and Jesus alone who can deliver from the judgment to come but how do I know how do I know that Jesus will be praying for me that I'll be safe well Jesus also said this listen all that the father gives to me all will come to me and whoever comes to me

I will never cast out you see that is the church's abiding message to the world isn't it God's judgment is coming Jesus' resurrection calls time on this world and there is no hope of escape unless Jesus will intercede for you as Abraham interceded for Lot but he says he will for whoever comes to him he will never cast out not ever he'll hold you on his heart before God forever and on that day that dreadful day of wrath God will remember him and save you to the uttermost so you fear God and you give him glory when you bow the knee to confess Jesus Christ as Lord that's the absolute command of the eternal gospel and yet whoever confesses

[44 : 50] Christ before man he promises promises to so confess before his father in heaven on that day and that's the abundant grace of the eternal gospel of God God remembered Abraham and saved lot in the midst of the overthrow the Lord being merciful to him let's pray gracious God our heavenly father we thank you that you love us enough to warn us of the truth the terrible truth because of our sin that we marvel that you love us so much more to provide for us an intercessor a great high priest the one who alone can save but the one who delights and promises to save everyone who comes to him so turn our eyes to worship your son our lord jesus christ and give him glory now and forever that on that great day we may be found rejoicing in the abundant sovereign mercy that saves us to the glory of jesus christ our lord amen