

Text: Gen. 19:1-14

Title: "The Hideous Profile of Sin"

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Introduction: There are medical cases that involve treating people who suffer with a malady that is truly hideous in the sense that their condition is quite shocking to the senses. I saw a show last week called "A Face for Marlie."

Marlie is a little Hatian girl that suffers from a rare disease that caused the bones of her face to keep growing out in a bulging fashion. The skin of her face was stretched around this growth, and the show described how doctors in the US cared for her. It was a touching and moving testimony. I especially enjoyed the part where Marlie's family sang "God Bless America." Some medical cases involve conditions that are truly hideous, shocking to the senses, and caring doctors must tend to these.

God is such a physician. His Word outlines for us the hideousness of sin, because that is exactly the condition that God is working His plan of salvation to correct. There is no beautiful sin, nor is there a sinner whose nature is not capable of what we see going on in Genesis 19, but the portrait of sin that we see here is truly a hideous sight. God has given us Genesis 19 so that we can see how hideous sin is.

But before we begin looking at what sin is like, I want us to take a moment to recognize that this not just a picture of unbelievers in Sodom; it is also a picture of a believer in Sodom, Abraham's nephew Lot. Believers are saved sinners. They are righteous not because of what they do, but because of what God has done for them (2 Pet. 2:6-8). As we as believers look at the portrait of sin in Genesis 19, we

must see here what we ourselves are capable of apart from the grace and power of God in our lives. We should not think that we could never be like Lot, or that our society could never be like Sodom.

This morning we are going to look at five characteristics that make sin hideous from Genesis 19.

I. Sin is hideous because of its hypocrisy (vv. 1-3).

Illustration: During the presidential campaign of 2004, it became known that both candidates, President George Bush and Senator John Kerry, were former members of the elite Yale secret society called the Order of Skull and Bones. Evidently, the club is open to only 15 Yale seniors each year, and it is believed that fewer than 1000 Bonesmen are alive today, so the chances that two would be running for President at the same time led to a lot of speculation and conspiracy theories. Their membership was viewed as a proverbial skeleton in the closet for each, and the media had some fun with the topic.

Lot is trying to hide something in the first few verses of this chapter. He has a skeleton in his closet. He has compromised the spiritual well-being of his family in order to obtain a level of success and popularity in an environment in which it is not safe to spend the night in the square, but he does not admit this to his angelic visitors. Instead, Lot tries to pretend as though there is no problem here, that he can simply show his visitors hospitality for a night and then send them on their way. I want us to see two things about the hypocrisy of sin from this example.

A. Lot demonstrates the hypocrisy of sin by courting both the approval of God and the approval of Sodom. He sits in

the gate of Sodom (v. 1) and makes allowances for the city's wickedness (vv. 2-3), and at the same time bows before the angels treating them with respect. He is living the life of a person straddling two worlds moving in different directions. This is a hideous way to live. This is the hypocrisy of sin. It is the unstable character the Book of James calls being "double-minded" (Jam. 1:8).

B. Lot demonstrates the hypocrisy of sin also by trying to fellowship with the Lord without confession of his sin. Lot thought that he could hide the reality of the situation he was in and carry on as though all in the world was well (note his plan in v. 2). The Lord had a different idea, and so he throws a wrench into Lot's scheme right away ("No, but we will spend the night in the square"). God is not impressed with our overtures of fellowship when we are being hypocritical about sin in our lives. He wants us to come clean with Him, confess, and get things made truly right. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18).

II. Sin is hideous because of its corruption (vv. 4-5).

Illustration: The word *corrupt* comes from a Latin word meaning *to break*. When something becomes corrupt, it is something that was originally a good thing but has been broken. Corruption is a good thing broken into a bad thing. I think our passage identifies three good things that are broken into bad things by the hideous corruption of sin.

A. Sin corrupts God's design for neighbor and neighbor (v. 4, the house was surrounded to prevent escape).

Application: The Bible teaches that God's law can be summed up by two commandments, love God and love

your neighbor as yourself. Sin perverts this by causing selfishness to reign in our hearts instead. James comments in this regard: "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?" (Jam. 4:1). Love is seeking the good of another; sin causes us to seek the pleasure of ourselves. Sin corrupts God's design for neighbor and neighbor.

#### B. Sin corrupts God's design for old and young (v. 4).

Application: Perhaps no passage describes God's design for old and young men better than Titus 2: "Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance" (v. 2); "Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach." God's design for men is that they be loving leaders and selfless faithful providers for their families. Sin breaks that design. The old lose their dignity and the young lose their innocence. Sin is hideous because it breaks God's design for old and young.

#### C. Sin corrupts God's design for male and female (v. 5).

Application: The epistle of Jude cites the sin of homosexuality as the cause of God's judgment on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah: "just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire" (v. 7). Just as lying is a corruption of God's design for the tongue, and stealing is a corruption of God's design for the hand, so also is homosexuality a corruption of God's design for male and female. Sin is hideous because it is the corruption of God's good design.

### III. Sin is hideous because of its relativism (vv. 6-8).

Illustration: I was listening to a debate last week between atheist Christopher Hitchens and a theist name Denish D'Sousa. The debate was held at King's College in New York City, and the topic had something to do with whether or not Christianity had been good for the world.

During one segment of the debate, the students of the college were invited to pose a question to either debater. One student was from the Fiji Islands, and he mentioned that historically his ancestors used to have one another for dinner; they were cannibals. When Christianity came to the islands, that practice was discouraged and halted. Then the student asked Hitchens the atheist what he might have had to offer by way of ethical instruction to the island natives from his perspective as someone who believed that there is no God.

Hitchens avoided answering the question by commenting how unfair it was for God to wait for as long as He did to send a Christian to the islands. It was a smooth debating technique, for had Hitchens answered the question directly, he would have been left with "my philosophy would have offered them nothing."

If there is no God who has communicated to us His absolute moral law, then right and wrong is relative, and eating one another becomes a matter of proper seasoning rather than proper behavior. We see a number of characteristics of the hideous relativism of sin in this chapter.

A. Moral relativism cannot identify the difference between sin and righteousness, good and evil, or right and wrong. Lot offered his daughters to the corrupt mob so that he could maintain a clean record on hospitality. We recoil at

that, and yet we live in a society today that tolerates the dismembering and head-crushing of innocents in the womb of their mothers so that these women need not undergo a change in career. These are the hideous results of the moral relativism of sin. We lose our ability to grasp the difference between right and wrong, good and evil.

B. Moral relativism always defends the interest of self over the interest of another. Lot can see the wickedness of the mob, but he cannot see his own wickedness. When morality becomes a matter of our own opinion, we always come out looking pretty good when all is said and done. This is why the religion of the Bible cannot be the invention of man. Man comes out looking far too evil and in far too much trouble. We need to understand that the posture of moral self-defense is not a posture that encourages spiritual growth. God blesses the humble heart and the contrite spirit of honest confession of sin (Psalm 51).

IV. Sin is hideous because of its pride (v. 9-11).

Illustration: C. S. Lewis said that pride is the one sin that we can see very easily in others but with great difficulty in ourselves, and the more we are guilty of it ourselves, the more we dislike it in others. Pride is a uniquely hideous sin in that way. We see some of its characteristics here.

A. Pride causes compromise where principle should eliminate it. Lot demonstrates the pride of compromise, yet his efforts in this regard are futile. Lot called the men of Sodom *brothers*, they called him *a stranger*. He wanted to be liked and admired by the godless, and for his trouble he obtained only their scorn and disrespect. This is how compromise with evil always works. Only pride can make us hope for a better outcome.

B. Pride causes defensive sensitivity where there should be honest self-evaluation. The men of Sodom accuse Lot of judging them. One of my Hebrew grammars says that the language here (an infinitive absolute after the finite verb; Ges. 113r) emphasizes continuance: "He constantly judges us."

We need to be sensitive to the fact that when we complain about others judging us, we are quoting the mob of Sodom. What is the better attitude in this regard? I think Paul states it well in 1 Cor. 11:31-32, "But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world." We are God's children, and we ought to expect his chastening and correction.

C. Pride causes stubborn resistance where there should be humble repentance. In spite of their blindness and suffering, the men of Sodom still wearied themselves to find the door. Sin is hideous in its pride.

V. Sin is hideous because of its unbelief (vv. 12-14).

Illustration: Spurgeon called the sin of final unbelief the one sin for which Christ did not die. I agree with him, and we see this condemnation of unbelief especially in the example of Lot's future sons-in-law.

A. The sons-in-law did not believe because they lived under conditions that did not recognize the hideousness of sin, nor the reality of God's coming judgment. We live in a day that glosses over the ugliness of sin. Pulpits refuse to say the word, much less preach what the Bible says about it. This causes unbelief. It is God's great blessing on all of us this morning that we are not deceived by these glosses.

B. The sons-in-law did not believe because Lot had lost all credibility. Lot became a Sodomite when he lost an understanding of the hideousness of sin.

Conclusion: What if Lot had taken a different path in Sodom? What if instead of vexing his righteous soul with the hideousness of his sin, he found the power of God's Spirit to vex his flesh while living with a righteous testimony? I think the Lord Jesus tells us what might have happened (Matt. 11:20-24).

God's mercy saved Lot, but the mercy of God could have done so much more had he been faithful. May we be faithful witnesses who understand and make known the hideousness of sin.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*