

The Scariest Verses In The Bible
He Seemed To Be Joking, Genesis 19:14

Some of us spent the early years of our Christian experience inundated with “How To” books. There were so many how to books that seemed to give the formula for success, but the majority of them were about the family.

Now I don’t believe that the authors were thinking this way, but many of the books came across to us parents as, “Just do this and your family, and especially your kids, will all turn out to love God and serve Him.”

It all came down to formulas and steps. Follow the right steps and all will be well.

Unfortunately sometimes those books failed to take into account that children are people just like us. They have wills, and priorities, and weaknesses. They have to deal with the same confusing world that we do. In fact, their world is exponentially more difficult than ours! Here’s the difference is, they lack experience.

They didn’t have the advantage we had of looking back on our mistakes and seeing where we went wrong. Every generation has this unique quality of seeing themselves as different. They’re not old like their parents. They see things in a completely unique way.

Although it’s been attributed to a number of people, the earliest I could find was this quote from a mid-nineteenth century historian and statesman François Guizot: “Not to be a communist at 20 is proof of want of heart; to be one at 30 is proof of want of head.”

In other words, what makes sense to someone without experience is often foolishness to one who’s lived the experiences of life.

But here’s the question I think we need to wrestle with, whether we’re coming from a religious perspective or not: Is life just about experience, or is there a genuine role parents play in their kids’ worldview?

Last week we started a study of some of the Bible verses that no one would ever pick for their favorites. These are verses that I’ve never heard anybody recite. But in this series we’re zeroing in on what I’ve titled, “The Scariest Verses In The Bible.”

These are verses that we tend to skip over, but they're just as important as those comforting promises. In fact, for some of you here today they may be eternally more relevant than any comforting verses you've heard, or even memorized.

This morning were going to look at a very unique character in the Bible, a man named Lot.

From eternity past, long before the creation God had a plan of forgiveness and redemption for the people He would create. A key figure in that plan of redemption is a man named Abram, whose name was later changed to Abraham.

Turn to Genesis 12, page 10 Read verse 1

We're not told how God made Himself known to Abraham; the Bible simply says God spoke to him. We don't know the mechanics of that, but we are told is, what He said. God said, "I want you to move out, away from your family to a new home. I'm not going to tell you where you're going, but just trust me."

Notice first of all that it was God himself who took the initiative in Abram's life. It wasn't Abram that made the first move toward God. Instead it was God who simply broke into Abram's life, and it was God who took the steps necessary to bring this man to himself.

Second, it's fascinating to see the kind of home that Abram grew up in; the kind of culture he was surrounded by.

In Joshua 24:2 it says, *And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.'*

As far as what Abram or Abraham did in his own life we don't know. But when the call of God came, he was living in an idolatrous home in the midst of an idolatrous society. The city of Ur in which Abraham grew up, was the center of worship for the Sumerian moon god Nanna. Abraham's father, maybe even Abraham himself, was a worshiper of this false God.

All of that becomes significant when we realize that Abraham's call is a beautiful picture of how God's deals with us today.

When God spoke to Abraham, Abraham was living in a pagan land, alienated from God, a stranger to the promises of God, living under judgment, doomed to destruction. Yet God breaks into this man's life and calls him to Himself.

That's the way it is with every one of us today. As descendants of Adam, the Bible says we're alienated from God; we're living under the judgment of hell, and we're doomed to

everlasting destruction. Yet in grace, God breaks into our lives through His Holy Spirit and calls us to Himself.

Now, you might feel kind of offended at those words. You might think of yourself, “Hey, wait a minute. I’m not such a bad person.” In fact you might feel like you’re a pretty good person. Surely, if there’s a God He’d smile on you and say, “You’re OK with Me. You did the best you could.”

That’s the way we think. But, here’s what the Bible says. You can choose to ignore it, and my job isn’t to convince you. My job is for me to say to simply express what God says about all of us.

He says, “The standard is My holiness and perfection. Nothing less.” Romans 3:23 in the New Testament, says, *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* In other words, the Bible says, we’ve all missed the mark. And the mark is God’s perfection. That’s what the Bible calls that outdated word, “sin.”

Roman’s 6:23 says, *For the wages of sin is death.* Death means separation from God. So if you’re wondering what does a guy from 4000 years ago have to do with my life today? Here it is.

Whether you’re Abraham or Fred or Suzie or Meredith or Edward. We all have fallen far short of God’s perfection. We all face separation from God. That’s the bad news.

But you know what? God always follows up bad news with good news. *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 6:23)

There’s always hope. There’s always grace. While we’re still drawing breath, there’s hope.

Now, Abraham responded to that call. In chapter 15 we’re told, he believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and verb translated as “counted”, חשב, in Hebrew means “God considered him, he counted him.”

Because Abraham believed God, God counted Him righteous. Forgiven.

And so it was by grace that he was saved and it was by grace that he became a key figure in God's purposes.

Now God's call to Abraham involved several things. First, it was a command to leave his country and his family.

Abraham originally lived in an ancient city named Ur, which was located in southern Mesopotamia. Ur is 4000 years old, and at one time critics of the Bible classified Ur as a mythological place, along with the rest of the cities and people of this time.

They said, “Who ever heard of Ur? Sounds like OZ. It’s just one more example of why you can’t trust the Bible. It’s full of ancient folklore.”

Then almost a hundred years ago a British archeologist named Sir Charles Leonard Wolley excavated the city of Ur.

By the way, if you had some college professor demean the historicity of the Bible, I’ll guarantee you he or she is spouting off outdated information that they learned in school from some professor who learned outdated information when they were in college.

Ur actually means “city” in both Sumerian and Akkadian. Ur is located about 365 km south of Baghdad. As it turns out, Abraham wasn't some strange wandering Bedouin from the backside of the desert who didn't know anything. Ur was one of the most important cities in the world at the time. It was a busy commercial center located at what was then the mouth of the Euphrates River.

The city covered about 4 square miles and had a population of about 300,000 people. Excavations show us that the houses were made of brick and white washed. They stood two stories high, some with up to 20 rooms.

Now, I can remember the day my grandparents got indoor plumbing in their house. When I was a kid we took a bath in a galvanized tub in the kitchen with well water heated on a wood fired stove.

You knew I was old, but you didn’t know I was that old, right? Actually, my grandparents lived on a farm in rural Alabama.

But, we’re so much more advanced than those ignorant people in the Bible, right? Listen, Ur had indoor plumbing, sinks, and toilets in 2000 B.C.

They had a highly organized educational system and in the schools the students, who wrote on clay tablets, studied square and cube root.

Abraham didn't live in a tent out battling sand storms. He lived in a comfortable, prosperous city. And yet God called him away from all of this because He had other plans for Abraham.

A second thing that was included in Abraham's call was a promise.

Read Verse 2, 3

God was going to establish a nation through Abraham so that He could bring the rest of His plan to pass. That nation turned out to be Israel and the Jewish people.

Once Abraham moved out, there were 3 promises made with no conditions attached.

#1. A promise to Abraham: God would make a great nation through him. His name would be great and he would be a blessing.

#2. A promise to Abraham's descendants: They would be a great nation. That implies lots of people with a homeland.

#3. A promise to non-Jews: All families of earth would be blessed. Salvation would come to the world through Abraham's descendant, Jesus Christ. This covenant was repeated over and over again. Not only to Abraham but also to Isaac and Jacob.

Back in Genesis 3:15 God promised to send the seed of the woman to crush the serpent's head. At times it looked like the opposite was going to happen and Satan would stop God's Savior.

Now up until this time God had been dealing with mankind as a whole.

Suddenly, He takes what appears, from the human standpoint, to be a completely new approach toward mankind. He began to prepare a new nation, one that would be responsible for carrying God's revelation to the world and through whom the Redeemer would finally come to work out God's plan of salvation. And Abraham is a key person in the plan.

Read vs 4-5

Abraham took a little detour to a place called Haran, but finally ends up where God wanted him, in the land of Canaan.

A couple of things to notice:

1. When God first called Abraham He didn't tell him where he wanted to end up. He just said, "Go to a land that I will show you." That took some faith.

2. Canaan was not Mesopotamia. It was wild, it was rugged place, and the worst part of all, it was full of Canaanites! The Canaanites worshipped a litany of gods like Baal, Asherah, Dagon, Moloch. They practiced child sacrifice by burning their children or entombing newborns in jars. They practiced every kind of sexual perversion imaginable (and some you

probably couldn't imagine), along with incest, all in the name of worshipping their gods and goddesses.

I know we think things are bad today, and they are, but they pale in comparison to the world that Abraham moved into.

3. He took his nephew with him, Lot.

Now read vs 10-20

Abraham is the Father of the Jewish people. Through him all people of the earth would be blessed. Everyone of us who have faith in Jesus Christ are spiritual descendants of Abraham. The New Testament calls him "the father of the faithful."

He trusted God enough to be willing to leave Ur, but He couldn't trust Him to protect Sarah and Him in Egypt.

Now, before we get down too hard on this guy, remember he's literally just been lifted out of idolatry. He has no written scripture. No podcasts from any great Christian preachers like me. He failed.

And so God restores him and he keeps going . Abraham builds altars and worshipped. But someone was watching. And that someone was Lot.

I can just imaging Lot thinking, "What a hypocrite my uncle is!"

Chapter 13

Abraham and his entourage leave Egypt and head back into Canaan.

Read verses 5-9

Sounds fair to me. But...

Read verses 10-13

Abraham failed, but he worshipped God. Since the Hebrew names of God have different emphasis, most English Bibles the translators let us know which Hebrew word was used in the original. You don't have to know Hebrew to know this.

If you see “LORD” or “GOD,” the original uses the name *YHVH* (יהוה) which comes from the verb הרה which means “to be.” This is the covenant name of the God of Israel. *YHVH* is the self-existent one.

If the word is Lord it’s “*adoni*” (אדני) which can be applied to God men. If it’s God it’s “*elohim*” (אלהים) which can be applied to the true God, or false gods, and even kings.

Abraham worships, but Lot skips the worshipping God part. Where does Lot head? Towards Sodom with all it’s obvious wickedness. He was dazzled by the bright lights of the big city, and by the next chapter he’s moved in. By chapter 19 Lot is sitting in the gate. That means he was part of the town council.

Now I realize that Lot wasn't really supposed to be with Abraham in the first place. But I also believe that Abraham's sin in Egypt had a terrible, negative effect on Lot.

If Abraham would have stayed in the land instead of going down to Egypt God would have provided and Lot would have seen God’s provision.

If Abraham would have continued to walk in faith instead of living in fear, Lot would have seen a tremendous demonstration of God's power. There would have been no question about Abraham's changed life. No hypocrisy to take Lot's eyes away from his uncle's God.

Lot was responsible for the way he was and what he did. He could never stand before God and use Abraham as an excuse. He couldn’t say, “Hey God, if you had to live with my hypocritical uncle, you’d be a little more understanding!” But the seeds were still sown. And in the next few chapters of Genesis, Abraham goes through plenty more grief because of Lot.

Don't ever think that you can sow sin and disobedience and not reap the results. (And if you think Abraham’s reaping painful results, wait till you see what Lot reaps.) Those results may not show up that day, or that week, or even that month, but the results will be there, believe me.

Sodom was known far and wide for its wickedness and Lot was drawn by the bright lights and sensual attractions to move into the city itself.

In Chapter 18 God himself announces to Abraham that ...*the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and ... their sin is very grave.* Genesis 18:20

Then Abraham intercedes for the city and God promises not to destroy it if there can be found 10 righteous people there. But in the end, there weren’t even 10.

Jude 7 gives us this description of Sodom: *Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.* (Jude 7)

That's the picture we usually have of Sodom. But now listen to this: *Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.* (Ezekiel 16:49)

The immorality was blatant. It's so easy to focus on that. But so was the materialism, laziness, and lack of concern for the poor. Sodom sounds a lot like cities in our world today. It even sounds like a bit like our country.

Here's what happened. God visited Sodom in the person of two angels. Angels in the Bible always appear as young men.

In Chapter 19 and verse 1 we read...

These two angels, who were in the form of men, had first visited Abraham and now had come to Lot.

Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. It could be that Lot was merely there to do business or it could even be that he was serving as some sort of magistrate at this point.

Whatever, Lot presents a sad picture. Here's a guy who had participated in one of the highest callings ever given by God to human beings. He'd been right there to experience tremendous revelations and deliverances from God. And yet now he was right at home in the midst of the life of one of the most wicked cities that ever disgraced the planet.

Now you might wonder was Lot really a God-follower? Was he a saved man, or was he an unbeliever? He sure acted like an unbeliever. But, just so that there's no question in our minds look at **II Peter 2 Page 1193**

Read verses 6-9

Lot was righteous by faith, not by his actions. The unrighteousness around him tormented his soul - it bothered him. But isn't it interesting that Lot stayed anyway? In fact, if you would have met him you would have assumed that he was lost and destined for hell.

He wasn't. He was a saved man, forgiven of his sins, and declared righteous by a holy God. But here's the price he paid.

Back to Genesis 19

You can read the gory details for yourself. A bunch of men wanted Lot to send out the young men so they could sexually abuse them. Lot said, no, but I 'll give you my daughters!"

Not exactly dad of the year! The men of Sodom said, "No way!" So God said, "That's it!"

Read 19:12—14

If Lot hadn't known before (and I kind of think he did by the way he tried to protect these guys), he certainly realized now that these men were really angels, sent by God to judge and destroy the cities of the plain. In an attitude of God's grace, the angels offered to spare Lot and his family, even including the men of Sodom who had married his other daughters.

At the same time the angels told him in no uncertain terms that his family would have to leave the city altogether, because it was about to be destroyed.

By this time, the mob had dispersed from around the house and Lot realized he was being divinely protected.

But his sons-in-law thought he was joking. They said, "You crazy old man. What do you know? You're nothing but an old fool."

And that was it. God rained down fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah, but Lot and his daughters escaped.

His wife wasn't so fortunate. She ended up with what modern medicine calls, Hyponatremia. God said' "Don't look back or I'll turn you into a pillar of salt. She was too tied to Sodom. She couldn't help herself.

Remember our question in the beginning? Is life just about experience, or is there a role parents play in their kids' worldview?

Lot had faith in Jehovah God. Lot was forgiven by God. But what a price he paid. His own sons-in-law thought he was joking when he tried to warn them about God's judgment. His wife couldn't help herself and had to look back.

If that was the end it would be bad enough. But one last thing.

Genesis 19:30-3

Wow. Talk about a shocker of an ending.

Leupold, in his commentary on Genesis, gives homiletical suggestions, or suggestions for preaching, at the end of each chapter.

At the end of Genesis 19 he writes. "Not every part of this chapter is suited for homiletical use. It seems to us that verses 1 - 11 contain several elements that would require explanation and yet cannot be explained without a measure of impropriety and if there be a difference of opinion on this point, certainly all must agree that verses 30 - 38 cannot be a text for a sermon."

I have to respectfully disagree. It's not a pleasant chapter. It's certainly not uplifting chapter. But I believe it's a chapter that everyone of us needs to read and reread. It is not written to excite us or to draw us into some mental participation in these sins.

The Bible never does that. God is always very careful to tell us these things in a way that keeps us at a distance. And yet they really happened. And there are lessons for all of us to learn in them.

Lot is an Old Testament example of a believer who tried to live like he didn't really belong to God.

Now the story of Lot is obviously an extreme case. Most of us can't identify directly with the depth to which he fell. But I believe we can all identify with the process. Every day of our lives the world around us holds out its attractions to us.

There are so many things to see, to look at, to think about; things that dull our sensitivity to God and His Word. We don't even have to go out looking. They come to us. How easy it is to see, and then choose, and then act on that choice.

For you, it might be an overwhelming desire for material things, for stuff, that dulls your sensitivity to God. For someone else it may be temptation to immorality, through what you see and think about. For others it may be something else.

You know your own heart and you know what it is that can capture you. There's only one solution. We need to see this world as God sees it, with its deception and enticement. And then we have to look the other way, and say "That's not me."

Abraham took those steps. Lot didn't. Abraham was blessed. Lot reaped what he sowed.

I want to leave you with one last thought. I honestly believe that we are so ingrained with the idea that good works have something to do with salvation that we constantly misread the Bible.

The single hardest concept for us to process is what the Bible calls grace.