



Purged

Destruction comes to those who dishonor God.

GENESIS 19:12-26

How many times would things have gone better if we had first considered the consequences of what we were about to do before doing it? Learning that there are consequences to our actions, words, and even to our thoughts can be a painful lesson to learn. The Bible teaches that there are always consequences for our decisions. This truth is highlighted in Genesis 19. Here we read of a people who had a ruinous end to their lives as a result of their sinful lifestyles and decisions to ignore the warnings they were given.

- **Why do people often fail to consider the consequences of their actions?**
-
-


UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

GENESIS 18:16–19:38

In Genesis 18:1-15, the Lord promised Abraham and Sarah that within the next year they would have a son (Gen. 18:10). In verses 18-19 we find one of the clearest statements in Genesis concerning His covenant with Abraham. First of all, God had “chosen” Abraham. This means God had a purpose for Abraham. His purpose for Abraham was that he would “become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him” (18:18). This would be accomplished through the faithful obedience of Abraham and his offspring (v. 19). In the end, there would be only one Son of Abraham who would perfectly “keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just” (18:19), and that is Christ (Phil. 2:8-11).

When Abraham realized that God was about to bring judgment on Sodom, he demonstrated an understanding of his calling and revealed something of his godly character by interceding to God on Sodom’s behalf. Abraham bargained with God to spare the people. God finally said He would spare the people of Sodom if there were ten righteous people in the city (Gen. 18:22-33).

When God’s angels arrived in Sodom, Lot met them and invited them into his home. Even though Lot had not joined in the wicked ways of the men of Sodom, the text indicates he had put himself and his family in a no-win situation by choosing to live there. The angels’ visit demonstrated just how depraved the men of the city were. Every one of them, young and old, surrounded the house and demanded that Lot send his visitors out of his house so “we can have sex with them.” When the mob became unruly, the angels struck them with blindness so that they could no longer pose a threat to those within the house (19:1-11). This set the stage for what transpired next. It also serves as a picture of God’s judgment on the wicked and a warning to Israel against becoming like the Canaanites, which happened and was recorded in the book of Judges (Judg. 19–20).

 **Read Genesis 19:12-26. What do these verses reveal about God’s mercy and His judgment?**

EXPLORE THE TEXT

URGENCY (GEN. 19:12-17)

¹² Then the angels said to Lot, “Do you have anyone else here: a son-in-law, your sons and daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of this place, ¹³ for we are about to destroy this place because the outcry against its people is so great before the LORD, that the LORD has sent us to destroy it.” ¹⁴ So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were going to marry his daughters. “Get up,” he said. “Get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city!” ¹⁵ But his sons-in-law thought he was joking. ¹⁶ At daybreak the angels urged Lot on: “Get up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city.” ¹⁷ But he hesitated. Because of the LORD’s compassion for him, the men grabbed his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters. They brought him out and left him outside the city. ¹⁷ As soon as the angels got them outside, one of them said, “Run for your lives! Don’t look back and don’t stop anywhere on the plain! Run to the mountains, or you will be swept away!”

VERSES 12-13

Lot thought he needed to save the angels from harm, but Lot was the one who needed saving. Once the angels ended the immediate threat of the men of Sodom by blinding them, they asked Lot if there was anyone else in his family or connected to him who needed to be warned of the coming judgment on the city. The angels’ question reminds us that God cares about the people we care about. The fact that the angels were even in Sodom to save Lot and his family is a testimony to God’s commitment to Abraham and those who mattered to him (Gen. 19:29). Lot had made some poor decisions, yet he was distressed by the immorality of the people of Sodom (2 Pet. 2:7). God saw fit to not only save Lot but also those who mattered to him if they were willing to listen to him and recognize their lives were at risk because of God’s impending judgment.

If there was any question in his mind about what was about to happen, the angels clearly stated that Lot needed to get the people he cared about out of the city because they were ***about to destroy*** it. They declared that it was ***the LORD*** who sent them to destroy the city.

VERSE 14

Demonstrating love for his daughters, Lot went to warn his future **sons-in-law** of the impending judgment. He told them that God was about to **destroy** the city and they should **get out** immediately.

The Hebrew verb used to denote that Sarah laughed when she heard the Lord promise her a son within the next year (Gen. 18:12) is the same verb used here to indicate how these men responded to Lot's warning. Just as Sarah thought it was ridiculous that God would give her a child at this stage in her life, these two men thought the announcement that God was about to destroy their city was preposterous. It was this kind of disbelief in God's judgment that led Adam and Eve to sin in the garden when the serpent told Eve, "No! You will certainly not die" (3:3-4). These two men again underscore the foolishness of ignoring God's warnings of judgment. Also, the connection of their response to Sarah's response should be a warning to Christians to beware of responding to God's Word the way non-Christians do—in disbelief.

VERSES 15-16

At daybreak the next day, Lot and his family still hadn't moved to get out of the city. So the angels urged him to **get up** and get moving lest they perish like everyone else. **But he hesitated.** Even though Lot did not participate in the sins the people of Sodom committed, he apparently had enough of an attachment to the lifestyle he enjoyed in that place that he struggled to loosen his grip on it to save his life and his family. This is what happens when one settles into a situation that is spiritually compromised.

The angels graciously grabbed Lot's hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and physically led them outside the city to save their lives. This happened because of a godly man's intercessory prayer (18:22-33; see Jas. 5:16) and a God who is great in His compassion and tender mercies. What a wonderful truth it is that God has compassion on His children even when we hesitate to trust Him completely.

- **Why did the angels grab the hands of Lot and his family?
What does this tell you about God?**

VERSE 17

When the angels got Lot's family outside of the city, one of the angels still had to exhort them to **run for your lives** and **run to the mountains** in order to save their lives. Seemingly, Lot and his family were so emotionally bound to Sodom that they resisted getting out as fast as they could to get to safety. This is also apparent by the fact that the angel thought it necessary to say to them, **Don't look back and don't stop anywhere on the plain!**

- Why do people ignore or hesitate in the face of God's promised judgment?

BARGAINING (GEN. 19:18-22)

¹⁸ But Lot said to them, “No, my lords — please. ¹⁹ Your servant has indeed found favor with you, and you have shown me great kindness by saving my life. But I can't run to the mountains; the disaster will overtake me, and I will die. ²⁰ Look, this town is close enough for me to flee to. It is a small place. Please let me run to it — it's only a small place, isn't it? — so that I can survive.” ²¹ And he said to him, “All right, I'll grant your request about this matter too and will not demolish the town you mentioned. ²² Hurry up! Run to it, for I cannot do anything until you get there.” Therefore the name of the city is Zoar.

VERSE 18

No, my lords was an odd way to respond to those who were saving his life, especially when those saving him were the Lord's messengers. The Hebrew word translated *lords* can be understood in one of three ways. It could be plural (“lords”), it could be singular (“lord”), or it could mean “Lord,” addressing God. In any case, it ultimately is addressed to God given that the angels were God's servants acting according to His will with His authority. Therefore, Lot's saying no to them was equivalent to saying no to God.

VERSES 19-20


Lot proceeded with a request. He acknowledged that the angels had indeed shown him grace and **great kindness** by saving him. However, he claimed that he was unable to **run to the mountains** before being

overtaken by the **disaster**. No doubt, Lot should have realized that if the Lord's messengers were telling him to run, then God would have enabled him and his family to do so. But Lot's actions throughout his life indicate he was a man who was not always as spiritually minded as he should have been.

Lot proposed that the angels allow him and his family to flee to a small town close enough for him to reach instead of running to the mountains. He appears to have been convinced that if he tried to make a run for the mountains like the angels told him to do, he and his family would not make it in time. Also, Lot twice described the town as **small**. This may imply it was not as wicked as the large city of Sodom, though it was one of the cities targeted by God to destroy. In this way, Lot is reminiscent of Abraham who interceded for Sodom. Could the angels not spare this *small* town for the sake of a few and still accomplish their mission?

VERSE 21

Just as the Lord conceded to Abraham's intercession to spare Sodom if ten righteous people could be found there, the angel conceded to Lot's request and promised not to destroy the small town to which he wished to flee. Again, the angels showed kindness to a somewhat difficult Lot. His responses to the angels during this entire episode provide a stark contrast to the immediacy of Abraham's responses to God's commands (see Gen. 12:4). This concession to Lot demonstrates that God honored His covenant with Abraham and Abraham's desire for God to spare the righteous, even if it was his wavering nephew, Lot. Moses wrote, "So it was, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham and brought Lot out of the middle of the upheaval when he demolished the cities where Lot had lived" (19:29).

 **Do your responses to God typically more resemble Lot's or Abraham's? Explain.**

VERSE 22

After making the concession to Lot, the angel again told Lot, **Hurry up! Run to it**. Also, it is clear that no action would be taken against the wicked people of Sodom and the plain until Lot and his family were

safe. Divine judgment was delayed by divine grace. Furthermore, as a reminder of this incident, the town to which Lot fled received a change of name. Originally it was the town of Bela, but from this time forward it would be called **•Zoar**, literally meaning “small” to remember how Lot described it to the angels. Moreover, its survival in this valley of destruction was a reminder of both God’s judgment and mercy.

BIBLE SKILL: *Observe when and for what purpose a New Testament passage references an Old Testament event.*

Read Luke 17:20-34. Observe how Jesus used the Old Testament accounts of Noah and Lot to illustrate His answer to the question concerning His return. Also note how Lot’s wife is an illustration for the critical truth found in Luke 17:33. What do you think it means to cling to your life in the context of the Old Testament story and the teaching of Jesus? What might be the meaning for your life according to the phrase “whoever loses his life will preserve it” (Luke 17:33)?

JUDGMENT (GEN. 19:23-26)

²³ The sun had risen over the land when Lot reached Zoar. ²⁴ Then out of the sky the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah burning sulfur from the LORD. ²⁵ He demolished these cities, the entire plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and whatever grew on the ground. ²⁶ But Lot’s wife looked back and became a pillar of salt.

VERSES 23-26

Verses 23-24 record both when and how the destruction of the plain finally happened. It happened only after Lot and his family safely **reached Zoar** at midday. It had just been the night before that the men of Sodom surrounded Lot’s house demanding he send out God’s messengers in order to have sex with them.

The men of Sodom had committed their sin under the cover of the darkness of night, but God’s judgment would be executed during the brightest part of the day for all to see. Just like the rain came down from the heavens in judgment on the wicked in Noah’s day, so a deluge of **burning sulfur** from **the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah**. This was no natural disaster; it was wrought by the mighty hand of God.

***Prioritizing worldly things over spiritual things
always results in disappointment and loss.***

With the exception of *Zoar*, all of the cities, inhabitants, and plant life in the entire plain were wiped out. Ironically, the fertile lands of the plain of the Jordan that enticed Lot to settle there were no more (13:11; see Deut. 29:23). Prioritizing worldly things over spiritual things always results in disappointment and loss.

Verse 26 is both startling and alarming. It is startling because it appeared that Lot and his family were finally safe from any threat of God’s judgment. However, **Lot’s wife** disobeyed the angel of the Lord who told them, “Don’t look back” (v. 17), and her disobedience had consequences. Her stopping to look back to Sodom evidenced her affections and desires were for the life she had in Sodom, and she paid for it with her life. It is startling because God’s turning her into a pillar of salt should be a reminder to everyone that even those who have experienced the grace of God are not immune to His punishment for sin. The Bible is full of examples of this truth, such as Moses who wrote Genesis (Deut. 32:51-52).

○ What might cause a person to look back to witness God’s judgment?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God*

God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections.
(See Psalm 77:13; Jeremiah 10:10.)

Creation: Beyond Genesis

By Argile A. Smith, Jr.

When we want to know what the Bible has to say about creation, we usually go to Genesis 1–2 for answers. Other Scripture passages, however, help us too. They offer insights into creation that enable us to understand more about God as Creator and everything He created.

THE “WHO” OF CREATION

The Bible points to God as the Creator of the universe. In His challenge to Job, God spoke of His creative acts: “Where were you when I established the earth? . . . Who fixed its dimensions? . . . Or who laid its cornerstone” (Job 38:4,5,6).

That God alone is the Creator is the most repeated fact in the passages that speak of creation. The affirmation about God the Creator resulted from noticing the existence of the world itself and the humans who live in it. A house’s presence gives

evidence of a builder. Likewise, the actual presence of the world and the people in it affirms God’s existence.¹

Psalmists declared that bedrock truth. For instance, David wrote a psalm about the glory of God that people could see by taking a long look at what He had created. David called attention to the heavens and the sky, day and night, as well as the sun’s rising and setting. He beheld all of it and testified that he could behold God’s glory in it (Ps. 19:1-6). Psalm 33 picked up the same line of testimony. The psalmist connected the presence of the heavens, stars, bodies of water, and other features of creation with the Lord who created all of it (33:6-9).

One psalm in particular shows how the human body’s intricate design points to the creating activity of God. In Psalm 139, David wrote that the parts of a person’s body underscored God’s presence. He observed that God the Creator could be seen in the existence of vital organs working together in a complex manner so a

human could function well for many years. The formation of a human body in a mother's womb also testified to God's work as Creator (139:13-14). Centuries later, the apostle Paul insisted that everyone could see for themselves the living God at work in His world. Nobody had an excuse, therefore, for saying that they did not know about God (Rom. 1:20).

THE "HOW" OF CREATION

According to the Bible, the universe did not form on its own or by accident. Nameless forces did not just happen to merge at the right time coincidentally so that something appeared from nothing. Quite the contrary, God took the initiative to create the universe completely on His own and absolutely by Himself. The psalmists described God's method of creation by way of anthropomorphisms.² They employed terms that described how ordinary people accomplish tasks in their effort to shed a glimmer of light on how God Almighty performed the miracles of creation.

For instance, David said God used His hands as He created the universe. Because of the work of God's hand, the sky and sun came to exist. As a result, God gave the sun a home in the sky as it traveled from east to west each day (Ps. 19:1,4). Although

David did not use specific scientific jargon from the field of astronomy in his description, he conveyed essential insights and affirmed God's personal touch by referring to God's hand in creation.

The psalmist who penned Psalm 33 declared that God used His voice to perform creation miracles. He observed that the stars had been placed in the sky and that water had been collected and stored in the sea. Then He affirmed that God spoke and the stars found their places in the heavens. With His word, the waters were gathered perfectly so the sea could be formed (33:6-7). Without using scientific terms, he spoke volumes about how God performed such monumental miracles of creation.

THE "WHY" OF CREATION

God had a purpose in mind when He created everything and everyone. We can best understand God's purpose in creation when we think about it in connection with redemption. For instance, the prophet Isaiah brought up God's work in creation as he assured His people of His intention to restore them (Isa. 45:7).³ Paul conveyed the same linkage when he taught believers that Jesus Christ was the centerpiece of creation. Paul affirmed that Christ created everything. Everything in creation



held together, therefore, only through Him (Col. 1:15-17). With his affirmation, Paul provided valuable wisdom for growing believers then and now. Without Christ, everything in the world falls apart. With Christ, however, everything in the world falls into place.

Paul also encouraged Christians to bear in mind the longing of God's creation. When God held Adam accountable for his sin, He stated that He cursed the ground too (Gen. 3:17-19). Since that moment, God's creation has been yearning to be set free from the curse. The long-awaited freedom from the curse would coincide with the eternal liberation of believers (Rom. 8:19-22).

Along with Paul, the apostle John had insights to offer regarding God's creation. At the beginning of Revelation, he wrote that the Lord gave him visions full of hope. In a vision about worship, he had an opportunity to peek into heaven and see a stirring picture of God being praised and adored. He

provided details about creation's role in worshiping the Lord. John had the created order in mind when he identified four creatures that kept on affirming God's holiness and sovereignty. God's creation never ceased to give Him honor and glory (Rev. 4:6-9). At the end of Revelation, John shared a vision about what the Lord would do with His creation in the future. In this vision, he saw a new heaven and a new earth. What he saw had been created by the Lord who declared that He would make all things new (21:1-5).

The Bible helps us to understand more about God's work in creation. His Word gives Christians a perspective on what the Lord has done that encourages us as we serve Him.

1. Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), 21.
2. Michael Fink, "Anthropomorphism" in *Holman Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Trent C. Butler (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 63.
3. Mike Mitchell, "Creation" in *ibid.*, 314.

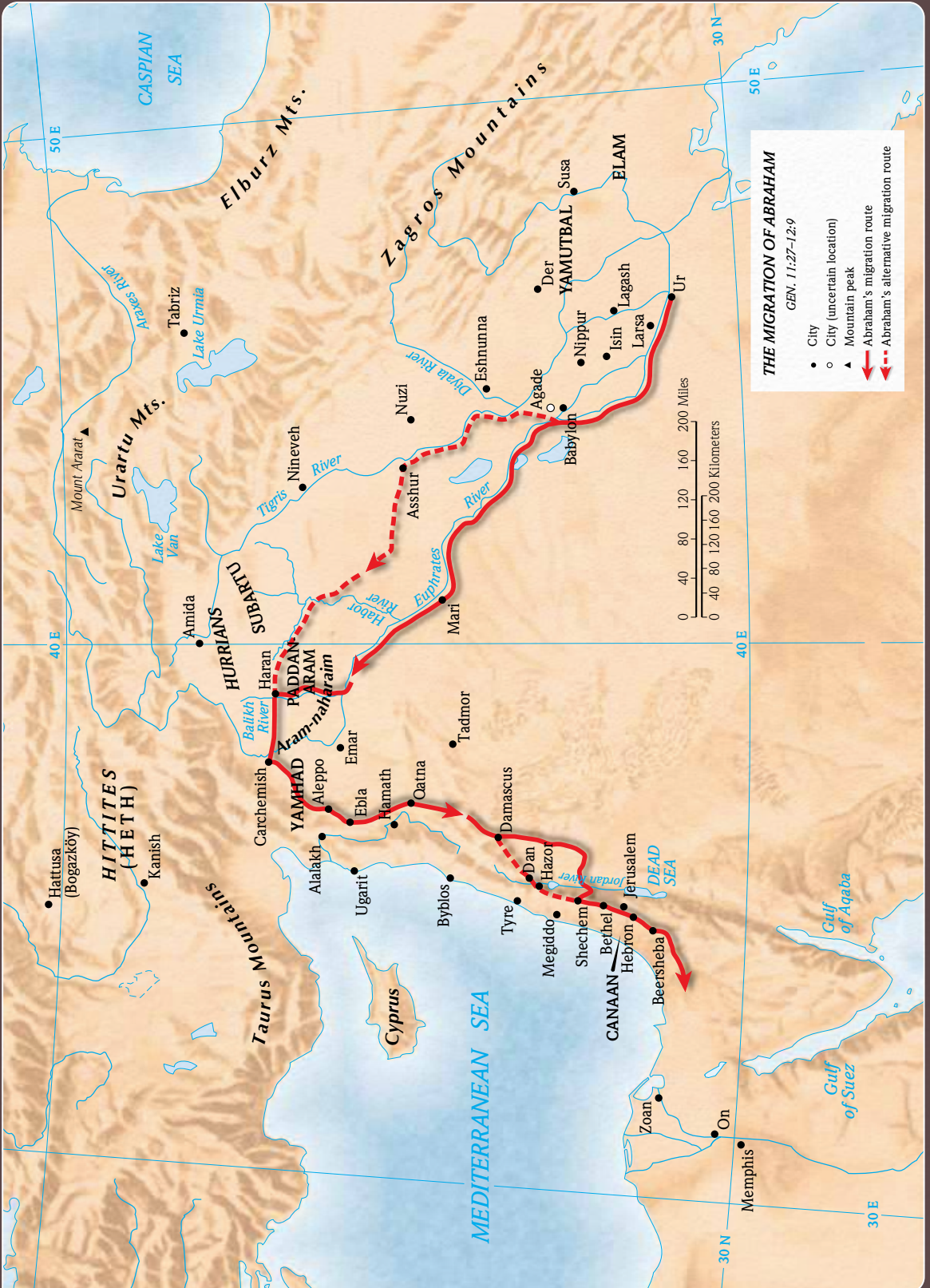
This article originally appeared in the Fall 2016 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Argile A. Smith, Jr. is the pastor of Parkway Baptist Church in Biloxi, Mississippi.

COMING **NEXT QUARTER**

GENESIS 20-50

- Session 1: **A Substitute** (Genesis 22:1-14)
- Session 2: **Guidance Needed** (Genesis 24:12-20,24-27)
- Session 3: **A Deceiver** (Genesis 27:18-30)
- Session 4: **A Stairway** (Genesis 28:10-22)
- Session 5: **Believe!** (John 20:1-17)
- Session 6: **Blessed** (Genesis 30:25-34,41-43)
- Session 7: **Wrestled** (Genesis 32:22-32)
- Session 8: **Renewed** (Genesis 35:1-15)
- Session 9: **Dreamer** (Genesis 37:5-8,18-28)
- Session 10: **Accused** (Genesis 39:7-21)
- Session 11: **Revealed** (Genesis 41:14-20,33-37)
- Session 12: **Reconcile** (Genesis 45:1-15)
- Session 13: **Revenge?** (Genesis 50:15-26)

The Migration of Abraham



"The Migration of Abraham" is adapted from the *Holman Bible Atlas* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1998), 46. Used with permission.

GENESIS 1-19

The old saying warns us that those who ignore the past are destined to repeat its mistakes. In Genesis 1-19, readers are given a front-row seat to where everything began—and how it all fell apart. Even more important, we see how a loving God moved to restore the shattered pieces by pointing His people toward a future hope. Our world is just as broken today as it was back then, which means the message of Genesis is just as vital today as it was back then.

Lifeway adults

goexplorethebible.com

RELIGION / Biblical Studies / Bible Study Guides

