**God Saved**

***23****The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar.****24****Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven.****25****And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.****26****But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.*

***27****And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord.****28****And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.*

***29****So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived. (Genesis 19:23-29, ESV)*

 As Christians, God saved us from sin by His will and through Jesus, just as He did Lot by the same will and power. Greetings as we talk today about some basic aspects of faith. Not only are we going to talk about God’s rescue of Lot, but also the prayers of Abraham on behalf of Lot. In reality, Lot escaped because both God and His uncle (Abraham) loved him, and the latter also interceded for him. Therefore, we’re going to see just what picture the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah represent, as well as what Lot and his rescue mean. Again, I want to stress that as believers, God saved us by His will through Jesus just as He did Lot. Let me explain some more…

 Despite the fact that God heard Abraham’s loving prayers and saved Lot, we need to realize that the decision to rescue was ultimately God’s and that man’s prayer was not the cause of the rescue. There are two main themes in this Scripture passage which become apparent from the first few verses of the chapter. First, Lot appears as a righteous man, but without a pilgrim spirit like Abraham’s. This may have meant that Lot’s faith was limited. Instead of following after Abraham, who was ready to move anywhere for God’s sake, Lot preferred to live a sedentary life in one location for his own reasons. On the other hand, there was the picture of the city (and inhabitants) of Sodom, which represented (until even today!) the world’s promises, wholly insecure, full of corruption and decay. Abraham was interceding from a distance, given that judgment was coming upon the land, and Abraham was God’s man, always desiring that people would not perish. There were two facets of judgment that come forward in this passage. First, the side of judgment that was catastrophic, which we saw in the destruction of the cities. Second, a gradual nature to judgment, which we saw in the spead of Lot’s family and the loss of his wife during the escape.

 Yes, it is true that Lot knew that the people of Sodom were evil. However, when the guests (who were angels!) declared the judgment over the city, it caused a huge panic among the people, and Lot’s attempt to quell the situation wound up endangering his daughters and enraging the inhabitants of the city. Lot could not make wicked people into righteous ones by his own efforts. The city was ruled by a self-righteous attitude among the locals. There was no solution to the latter, and Lot had to either follow after his guests, or stay and be subject to the evil of the inhabitants. Lot’s anti-pilgrim stance was a sign that he still considered his own comfort as higher and more important that God’s will. He was still trying to keep his past in his present life. Lot wanted to keep a personal “Sodom” with him wherever he could go, and thus God had to drag him to a safe village by force. In the meantime, Lot’s wifes’ manner of perishing was a universal picture, as if to show that those who stay near their sins as a kind of longing for their own “Sodom”, would not follow the path of God’s salvation and would eventually be lost.

 The most painful but true reality is that even though Abraham intercedes and God is patient, but humans’ rebellious and disobedient stance toward God invites judgement on the city. Nevertheless, God did not only remember Lot, but first Abraham, and after considering the latter’s prayers, he saved Lot, dragging him out of the crumbling city.

 There was once a story about a man who had stolen from the US Postal service and had been arrested and convicted. He had been given the death penalty and was set to hang. The President of the United States had declared a pardon for the man, but there was one issue: the man had not accepted the letter of pardon. The lawsuit to save the man reached the Supreme Court and the chief justice wrote the following: “The pardon is a piece of paper – of which value is decided by the one who is being pardoned. If the paper is rejected, then it does not represent a pardon. Therefore, the man must hang.” The one telling the story said, “for some, the pardon comes too late – and for others, the pardon is not accepted.”

 Lot had even told his sons-in-law to come along with him and be saved, but they rejected the chance to be saved. Lot’s wife was also told not to look back while escaping, but she rejected the word of warning. Additionally, if Abraham, who was a prayerful man and a holy man before God could not save a single soul by his prayers without God’s decision, then it is truly God who saves and we who pray to align closer to His will and see his mercy and justice. Despite the fact that God heard Abraham’s loving prayers and saved Lot, we need to realize that the decision to rescue was ultimately God’s and that man’s prayer was not the cause of the rescue.

 In other words, when you pray, know that you do so to know God better, rather than to try to change His mind about a matter. Since God’s will is based on His own Word and He does not contradict or act in opposition to it, unless He declares a new Word for a specific situation. However, though the above is true, when you approach God based on trusting in His Word, then it may be that you will see the answer to your prayer, since not every event that occurs on earth is God’s will to begin with. However, this latter truth is a entirely different sermon…

 Therefore, let’s make an effort to know God even more, so that we live according to His ways and not find ourselves in difficult situations like Lot did, and not have to force God to save us by the skin of our teeth, so to speak. As Christians, God saved us from sin by His will and through Jesus, just as He did Lot by that same will and power.