

# GENESIS—WEEK 15

## GOD RESCUES



F. Michael Slay  
*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*The Cover Picture is Lot and his family flee from Sodom by Albrecht Dürer (1471 – 1528)  
On display in The National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC*

This section begins with Lot tarrying and getting dragged out of his house by the angels. Then he “negotiates” about where to flee to and the angels cut him some slack. But his wife looks back—oops! Then his “negotiations” backfire and he has to move again. Then his daughters pull a boneheaded move to get pregnant by their father.

Lastly, Abraham **again** passes off Sarah as his sister and gets called out on it big time.

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We are a spiritual fellowship patterned after the Celtic Revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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Thank you.

Genesis 19:15–20:13 — God Rescues  
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1 Genesis 19:15-22 (ESV)

*As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.” But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. And as they brought them out, one said, “Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away.” And Lot said to them, “Oh, no, my lords. Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life. But I cannot escape to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I die. Behold, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there—is it not a little one?—and my life will be saved!” He said to him, “Behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. Escape there quickly, for I can do nothing till you arrive there.” Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.*

Picture the angels physically seizing them by the hand and bringing them out. It’s almost comical. Lot is not obeying the very command he gave his sons-in-law. He’s dysfunctional, and the angels have to take over. The text specifically says that this is a portrait of God’s mercy. This time, God’s mercy literally involves handholding.

Then the angels tell Lot to run for the hills without even looking back. So, sure enough, Lot chooses that moment to argue for a different destination. Seriously, Lot? Did you notice that the angels dragged you out of your house? Now you want to dicker about what’s the best place to flee to? Do you really think that even though the whole valley will be destroyed, one city should be safe because it’s small?

Actually, Lot’s not arguing against their description of what’s safe; he’s arguing for them to block off a small exception. Thus doth the portrait of God’s grace continue.

*“Behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken.”*

The key word here is “also.” As we will see, Zoar doesn’t work out anyway. God cuts Lot a break (again) just to display His grace and mercy (again).

Is this a recurring theme or what? It must be important.

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God’s patience, grace and mercy are the central theme of the Bible—plus that we don’t deserve those things. Praise Him.

Think back on how the Lord has been merciful (and patient, and graceful) with you. God’s grace is usually coupled with your need for His grace.

So, try to recall the times you’ve messed up. Yeah, that can be difficult and painful.

His strength is displayed through our weakness.

2 Genesis 19:23-29 (ESV)

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

*And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. 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.*

*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.*

After all the slack God has cut Abraham and Lot, Lot's wife gets turned into a pillar of salt for the crime of "looking back." Yes, God can show mercy whenever and wherever He wants, and those who received justice instead of mercy have no right to complain. Still, this seems inconsistent.

It's not, and it's important to understand why it's not. There's a critical difference between what Lot's wife did and what Abraham and Lot did. She directly defied a command. Abraham and Lot argued with the angels about what should be done. They spoke from ignorance, but they were still just arguments. They didn't disobey anything.

But Lot's wife committed an in-your-face rebellious act. She violated the only "do not" command she was given. She may have thought the command was silly, but she didn't ask.

The Bible is filled with examples of God's wrath against those who directly defy Him (e.g., Uzzah in 2 Samuel 6:6-7, Jonah in Jonah 1:1-6).

But people who openly bring their questions and their confusion before Him are treated like students (e.g., Thomas in John 20:24-27).

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This distinction can be boiled down to one word—submission. We should always be in submission to the Lord; otherwise the word "Lord" has no meaning. We can ask questions until we're blue in the face—even argue—but submitting to His answers is a must.

This principle helps shape our prayers. We shouldn't be afraid to lay our doubts, fears, and anger before the Lord. The Bible has a whole book of Lamentations, which is all by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The best students ask questions. Frankly, you learn and grow fastest when you don't ignore tough issues.

It's okay to be angry as long as you're straight with God. Be yourself. He expects us to be sinners. Our prayers are not going to be impressive. He wants them anyway—just as they are.

He uses those prayers gloriously.

3 Genesis 19:30-38 (ESV)

*Now Lot went up out of Zoar and lived in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to live in Zoar. So he lived in a cave with his two daughters. And the firstborn said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father.” So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father. He did not know when she lay down or when she arose.*

*The next day, the firstborn said to the younger, “Behold, I lay last night with my father. Let us make him drink wine tonight also. Then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father.” So they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. Thus both the daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father. The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day. The younger also bore a son and called his name Ben-ammi. He is the father of the Ammonites to this day.*

Faith changes everything. Having grown up in the Sodom culture, Lot’s daughters were steeped in a secular culture, and they saw things through that lens. When Lot discovers that Zoar isn’t a nice town and so heads for the hills, his daughters say, “*There is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the earth.*” They weren’t thinking, “I wonder what great thing God is going to do next.”

Surely, their dad had told them about his rescue at the hands of Abraham and about how Abraham’s household defeated kings in battle to do it. Obviously, there were plenty of able-bodied men involved, and the girls should be aware that they don’t live that far away. If they’d thought rationally about all this for five seconds, they wouldn’t have been so pessimistic.

Instead, they let their imaginations run wild and saw everything through the lens of hell. So, they hatch this demented plan to get pregnant by their father. That can’t end well.

We’re not told how it does end, but Lot must have eventually figured it all out. Surely this broke his heart.

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Our culture is no less poisonous. The computer you’re reading this on is a conduit to all things both good and evil. We’re swamped by cultural influences. Those influences interact with our sinful nature to assault us from every direction. How can we keep from being destroyed?

By faith. How you think affects how you see. Those who don’t wonder about why things happen can’t see God’s hand. Lot’s daughters heard the angels predict the events to come, but that didn’t open their eyes.

And notice that the lesson Lot’s daughters missed seems almost unmissable. Their mom was killed in a cataclysmic event that wiped out the whole valley. Their natural reaction is denial and repressed memory.

The key is to resist reacting “naturally.” God is often most visible in the things we don’t want to look at.

4 Genesis 20:1-7 (ESV)

*From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife.” Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, “Lord, will you kill an innocent people? Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.” Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.”*

How can the father of faith do something this faithless **again**? The answer is twofold.

First, he’s not the father of faith—yet. That’s his major in this school of hard knocks, but he hasn’t graduated. Second, people are inconsistent. Even when Abraham’s faith is fully matured, we can’t expect it to be fully functioning all the time. That’s just not how we’re wired.

A branch of mathematics, [modeling human judgment](#), studies this. Amazingly, models built to emulate the judgment of an expert often outperform the expert. No one is quite sure how this happens—maybe the models just never get tired—but it proves that the experts aren’t consistent.

We often say we need a savior because we’re not perfect. Inconsistent is more like it. Even the things we do right, we don’t always do right. Abraham’s lapse here is just that—a lapse. That’s why grace is the only way. If God doesn’t cut us some slack, we’re goners.

And God cuts Abraham, and Sarah, and Abimelech some major slack here. He not only supernaturally interferes with the sequence of events, He explains it to Abimelech, saying, “*I did not let you touch her.*”

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Praise God for His grace! Think about how we show grace to other people. Has someone let you down? How did you react? Have you let others down? How did they react?

These memories may be painful to dredge up, but this can be worth the effort. We tend to give less grace to other people than we expect them to give us. If we can honestly remember how this has played out in the past, we can be alerted to our own lack of grace and learn to show grace better.

But there’s another angle that, for some, matters more. The level of grace that God gives us is far beyond what we give. This can be hard to accept. Forgiving others is hard, but forgiving ourselves can be harder.

If you’ve done something you don’t see as forgivable, God’s grace may not feel “right.”

But it is.

5 Genesis 20:8-13 (ESV)

*So Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told them all these things. And the men were very much afraid. Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, “What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.” And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What did you see, that you did this thing?” Abraham said, “I did it because I thought, ‘There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’ Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. And when God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, ‘This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, “He is my brother.”’”*

Abimelech could have used the comeback line, “If you keep on prejudging people like this, some dang fool just might mistake that for prejudice.” Abraham’s bigoted assumptions about Abimelech wouldn’t justify his actions, even if they were true—which they aren’t.

Meanwhile, God is in control and has a lesson in store for Abraham. By protecting Sarah in the outrageous situation Abraham put her into, God is displaying his power and his faithfulness. Abraham’s scheme is being overridden by the LORD.

But the main lesson comes from Abimelech.

*“What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.”*

His use of the word “sin” sharpens the point.

This wasn’t just dumb; it was an offense against the LORD.

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This is the road of sanctification that we all walk. God hammers into us lesson upon lesson about who we are and who he is.

However, the lesson usually isn’t a twofer. A lesson will typically either display who God is, or it will expose something about us. Both at the same time would be too painful a contrast.

And that’s the takeaway here. Sanctification is one place where the slogan, “No pain, no gain,” is apt. Remember that the next time you’re suffering, especially for something you did wrong. Look for the lesson.

Prayers at times like these have been some of the most productive prayers I have made. As always, leaving the mask off is essential—though kind of obvious in this case.

And it’s okay to just look heavenward and scream, “And your point would be?”

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. Have you ever experienced surprising or extraordinary grace? How long did it take you to figure out that's what had happened?
2. Do you struggle to submit to authority, even when there's no good reason to disobey?
3. Ever been frustrated by a friend's or loved one's blindness to something you think is obvious?
4. Have you ever struggled to forgive yourself?
5. Have you ever recognized God's hand in an embarrassing situation?