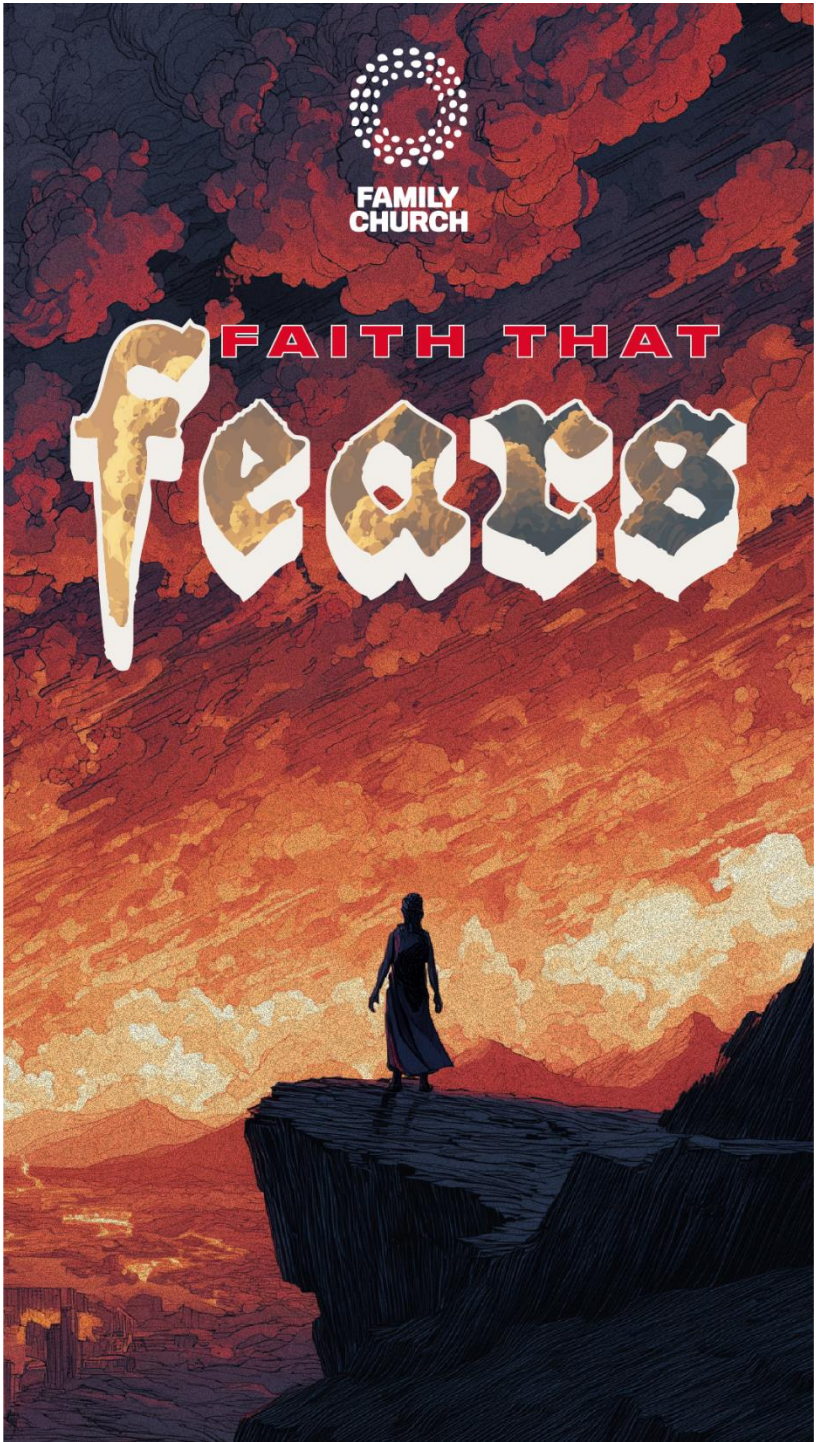




FAMILY
CHURCH

FAITH THAT fears



Faith That Fears

A Journey Through Genesis 19

Chapter 1 – What Are You Afraid Of?

Fear. It is a universal human experience. Each of us, at one time or another, has wrestled with fears that shape our decisions and drive our behavior. For some, the fear is rejection — the haunting thought of being unwanted, unloved, or left behind. Others battle the fear of loneliness, which can lead them into relationships they know are unhealthy, simply to fill the void of isolation. Still others carry the heavy burden of financial fear, wondering if tomorrow will bring enough provision to meet their needs. Some lie awake at night afraid of a doctor’s diagnosis, a family crisis, or the uncertainty of the future.

What you fear says a great deal about where your trust is anchored. Fear has a way of exposing the foundation of our faith. A person who fears rejection will often become a people-pleaser, bending their convictions to win approval. A person who fears loneliness may compromise their values just to feel connected. Fear can quietly, but powerfully, govern the choices of our lives.

Scripture does not shy away from this reality. The Book of Proverbs reminds us: *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding”* (Proverbs 9:10). But the “fear of the Lord” here is not about trembling terror, nor is it about running from God as if He were cruel or capricious. Instead, it describes a holy reverence — a profound awe of God’s holiness, justice, mercy, and love. It is the kind of fear that does not push us away but draws us closer, the fear that inspires respect, obedience, and worship.

Think of it this way: when I was young, I feared my parents. Not because they were cruel, but because they believed in discipline. As I grew older and left home, that fear transformed. I no longer feared their discipline — instead, I feared disappointing them. I wanted to live in a way that honored them, that made them proud.

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That is a picture of what the fear of the Lord should look like in our lives.

Today, we turn to the story of Lot, Abraham's nephew, as recorded in Genesis 19. Lot knew God. He had traveled with Abraham. He had witnessed God's provision. And yet, Lot lacked the fear of God. His story serves as a sobering warning for us, because in his choices we see a picture of what happens when a person knows about God but does not revere Him.

The lesson before us is clear: faith that is real must also be a faith that fears. Not a paralyzing fear, but a holy fear that keeps us from drifting too close to sin, too comfortable with the culture, and too careless with God's warnings. Lot's life teaches us how not to live — and by contrast, it shows us how we can walk in wisdom, faith, and reverence before the Lord.

Chapter 2 – Too Close to the Culture

Lot's story begins with promise. He was the nephew of Abraham, the man whom God called to leave everything familiar and follow Him into a new land. When Abraham set out in obedience, Lot went with him. He witnessed Abraham's faith firsthand. He stood at altars of worship. He saw God's covenant unfold. By all accounts, Lot had every opportunity to cultivate a deep and abiding fear of the Lord.

But somewhere along the way, Lot's heart drifted.

When Abraham and Lot could no longer dwell together because their flocks and herds were too large for the land, Abraham gave Lot the choice of where to settle. Lot looked toward the fertile plain near Sodom. The Bible describes it as looking like the very Garden of Eden — lush, green, abundant. To Lot's eyes, it was the obvious choice. Yet Scripture also hints at the danger, noting that the people of Sodom were exceedingly wicked.

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At first, Lot merely *pitched his tents near Sodom*. But by Genesis 19, we find him not simply living *near* the city, but dwelling *in* it. More than that, he is seated at the city gate — a position of leadership and influence, a place reserved for elders and judges. Lot, once a sojourner alongside a man of faith, had become a respected citizen of a corrupt city.

Here lies the warning: when you live too close to sin, it soon lives too close to you. What we tolerate, we eventually accept. What we accept, we eventually normalize. And what we normalize, we eventually participate in. Lot's physical move toward Sodom mirrors the spiritual drift of his heart.

The same danger confronts us today. The culture around us does not invite us to holiness; it seduces us into compromise. It whispers that truth is relative, that morality is flexible, that faith should be private and never public. It tempts us with materialism, convinces us to tolerate sin in the name of love, and urges us to build our own kingdom rather than seek God's.

But the Apostle John is blunt: *"If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him"* (1 John 2:15). To embrace the culture's values at the expense of God's truth is to trade eternal joy for temporary acceptance.

Lot's presence at the city gate was not just a geographical reality; it was a spiritual indictment. He had gone from being a worshiper with Abraham to being an elder in Sodom. Though he knew God, part of Sodom now lived in him.

And that is the danger for us as well. We can attend church, know the Scriptures, even call ourselves Christians — and yet, slowly, without realizing it, allow the culture to shape us more than the Spirit of God.

A faith that fears will tremble at this possibility. It will not grow comfortable with compromise. It will not flirt with sin. It will recognize that the closer we draw to the culture, the farther we drift from the cross.

Chapter 3 – The Warning They Laughed At

When the angels arrived in Sodom, Lot urged them not to remain in the public square but to take refuge in his home. He knew the city too well. By nightfall, the men of Sodom surrounded his house, demanding that the visitors be handed over to them. Their sin had become so ingrained, so shameless, that the outcry of wickedness rose all the way to heaven.

The angels revealed their purpose: God’s judgment was imminent. They told Lot to gather his family and leave, for the Lord was about to destroy the city. Lot hurried to his sons-in-law, the men pledged to marry his daughters, and delivered the urgent warning: *“Get up! Get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city.”*

But Scripture records a heartbreaking response: *“His sons-in-law thought he was joking.”*

How tragic. The very people closest to him — the ones whose lives could have been spared — laughed off his words. They could not imagine that God’s judgment was real, or that it was near. Their love for the city blinded them to the seriousness of their situation. They perished with the rest of Sodom.

Their reaction is not so different from today. In our culture, nearly everyone has heard of God. Most people have at least some awareness of heaven, hell, or the idea of judgment. And yet, for many, the notion is dismissed as myth, as exaggeration, or even as a joke. “Surely God won’t judge us,” people say. “Surely we are enlightened, advanced, too modern to believe in such things.”

But the Bible is unflinching: there will come a day when every person stands before the Lord. For those who belong to Christ, it will be a judgment of reward. For those who reject Him, it will be a judgment of separation and eternal loss.

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Lot's sons-in-law stand as a sobering reminder: proximity to the truth does not guarantee salvation. They were part of Lot's family, they heard the warning, and yet they refused to believe. Their disbelief cost them everything.

This is why faith that fears is so essential. A healthy, holy fear of God takes His warnings seriously. It recognizes that judgment is not a joke, and eternity is not a game. It hears God's call to flee from sin and does not delay.

Lot's sons-in-law teach us this: when God warns, the only right response is to obey. To hesitate is to perish. To laugh it off is to forfeit grace.

Chapter 4 – Judgment Falls and the Danger of Looking Back

The angels did not delay. They urged Lot and his family to leave the city quickly. God's judgment was coming, and there was no time to waste. Lot hesitated, but in His mercy, the Lord took hold of him, his wife, and his daughters and led them outside the city.

As they escaped, the command was clear: *“Don't look back. Don't stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away!”* (Genesis 19:17). Yet as they fled, Lot's wife disobeyed. She turned back toward Sodom, and instantly, she became a pillar of salt.

This act was more than a glance. The Hebrew word suggests she turned with longing, looking back with a heart that was still tied to the city she left behind. Her gaze revealed her desire. She wasn't simply curious — she yearned for what she was leaving. And in that moment, judgment fell on her too.

Even today, the geography bears witness. Sodom and Gomorrah were located near the southeastern edge of the Dead Sea. Archaeological digs confirm that some cataclysmic event occurred there — whether volcanic, meteoric, or supernatural fire from heaven, the land itself still testifies. The region is barren, lifeless,

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and saturated with salt. Once it resembled the Garden of Eden, but now it is desolate, a wasteland where nothing grows.

Lot's wife stands as a warning for us. Jesus Himself would later say, "*Remember Lot's wife*" (Luke 17:32). Why? Because her heart was divided. She was leaving the city physically, but she had never left it spiritually. She longed for what God was judging. And in doing so, she perished.

How often do we risk the same mistake? God calls us out of sin, but we look back with longing. He delivers us from destructive habits, but we turn our eyes to what enslaved us. He calls us into holiness, but our hearts still crave the old life.

A faith that fears understands this: to look back with longing is to put yourself in danger. The world may seem appealing, but its pleasures are fleeting. To love what God condemns is to risk sharing in its destruction.

Lot's wife had every opportunity to escape with her family. Yet one backward glance revealed the truth of her heart. She serves as a permanent reminder that compromise with the world is deadly.

Chapter 5 – The Lasting Consequences of Sin

Sodom was gone. Fire and sulfur had rained down from heaven, and the fertile valley Lot once chose because it looked like the Garden of Eden had become a barren wasteland. Lot and his two daughters escaped to the mountains, settling in a cave. The city was destroyed, his wife was gone, and his future appeared uncertain.

It is here that another tragedy unfolds. Believing they had no hope of finding husbands and preserving their family line, Lot's daughters took matters into their own hands. They got their father drunk and committed incest with him on two successive nights. Each became pregnant, and both gave birth to sons.

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The first son was named Moab, the ancestor of the Moabites. The second was named Ben-Ammi, the ancestor of the Ammonites. These two nations would grow strong and become bitter enemies of Israel for generations.

This was not a private sin with private consequences. It unleashed centuries of hostility and bloodshed. Moses, writing this account as Israel wandered in the wilderness, would have known firsthand how the Moabites and Ammonites opposed God's people at every turn. Countless Israelites would die in battles that traced their origin back to this moment of compromise and sin.

The lesson is sobering: our sins do not only affect us. They affect those who come after us.

Children watch the choices of their parents. They absorb what a marriage looks like, how forgiveness is practiced, how faith is lived out, how priorities are set. If children grow up in homes marked by bitterness, anger, or abuse, they are more likely to repeat the same patterns. If they grow up in homes consumed by materialism or addictions, those patterns can become their inheritance.

This is not to say the cycle cannot be broken. By God's grace, many have stepped out of generational sin and walked in freedom. But the truth remains: our decisions today ripple into the future. Lot's compromise did not end in Sodom. It lived on in the Moabites and Ammonites, enemies of God's people for centuries.

A faith that fears will recognize this reality. It will understand that sin carries consequences far beyond the moment. It will tremble not only at the thought of dishonoring God but also at the thought of leaving a legacy of destruction for the next generation.

Lot's story teaches us that when we choose compromise, we are not only gambling with our own lives. We are setting a trajectory for our children, our grandchildren, and beyond. The stakes are higher than we often realize.

Chapter 6 – Closer to Sodom Than You Think

Lot's story is not just ancient history. It is a mirror for us today. His compromises, his hesitations, and his failures all serve as warnings. They reveal how easy it is to drift spiritually, and how quickly sin can entangle us.

So how do we know if we are walking too close to Sodom? The pastor gave us some signs.

You may be closer to Sodom than you think if sin no longer disturbs you. When evil no longer grieves your heart, when you can watch violence, immorality, or blasphemy without a flicker of sorrow, it is a sign that your conscience is becoming dull.

You may be closer to Sodom than you think if you tolerate “small sins” in your life. The little compromises, the half-truths, the habits you excuse — these are often the footholds through which greater sins take root.

You may be closer to Sodom than you think if your faith is lukewarm. When prayer is rare, worship is routine, and obedience is optional, you are not living in holy fear — you are drifting toward spiritual apathy.

The truth is simple: the world is always pulling at us. Its values, its priorities, and its pleasures are always calling us closer. Without vigilance, without reverence, we will begin to look more like Sodom than like Christ.

That is why faith that fears is so essential. Not a fear that paralyzes, but a holy fear that drives us to holiness. A fear that remembers God's judgment is real, His promises are sure, and His holiness is uncompromising.

Lot's life ended in tragedy because he knew God but did not fear Him. His story calls us to something higher. To live with awe, reverence, and respect before the Lord. To trust His promises and

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tremble at His warnings. To leave Sodom behind — not only with our feet, but with our hearts.

Faith that fears is faith that flourishes. It is faith that takes God seriously, that clings to His Word, that seeks His Kingdom first. It is faith that endures, even when the world tempts us to turn back.

And so the question remains: Where are you today? Are you lingering near Sodom? Are you compromising with the culture? Or will you choose the path of reverence, holiness, and trust in the God who saves?
