

引言 INTRODUCTION

Before we proceed, let me briefly explain the sermon title. An apostrophe is a punctuation mark that serves two functions. First, it indicates possession. For example, we say this building is God's house. It can also be used for omission of words. Instead of saying "I do not know" we can use "I don't know." Apostrophe is also a Greek word that means turn away from. The prefix "apo" stands for "from." And "strophe" means "turn away." Altogether, the sermon title refers to dodging from a disaster. The catastrophe in view is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Remember God and two angels appeared as humans and went to Abraham's home. God told Abraham about the coming judgment of the two cities. The man then pleaded for God's mercy. He asked God to spare everyone if He could find a certain number of righteous people there. Abraham began from 50 people, and he ended at ten. Afterward, the two angels continued their journey to Sodom. The story today focuses on Lot, Abraham's nephew. The series of events help solidify something Abraham knew about God. Since God is holy and righteous, He will deal with sin. The passage talks about sexual relationship, in particular, homosexual inclination. God defines homosexual activity as a sin. Before we condemn homosexuality, we need to realize that we are all sinners. We just commit different sins. Without God's grace, we will be judged.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 敗壞 Perversion

God planned to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah due to the perversion of sinners. Let me read from **verse 1 to 11**. The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening. Lot happened to be at the city gate. He invited the two travelers to stay overnight in his home. He surely knew how dangerous it would be to sleep in the open. He served the guests some unleavened bread, possibly because there was no time to raise dough. In contrast to Lot's hospitality, the locals showed hostility. All the men, young and old, from all over the town surrounded Lot's house. Verse 5 tells us what they wanted: **And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them."** Did they want to sip coffee with the two strangers to get to know each other? The word "know" in both Hebrew and Greek can mean sexual union. You can look up examples like Genesis 4:1 and Matthew 1:25. The crowd wanted to have intimate relationships with the two visitors. We confirm that from Lot's reply in verses 7-8: **7 ... "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. 8 Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof."** It is unthinkable that a father would use his unmarried daughters in exchange for two strangers! There may be two reasons behind that proposal. First, Lot followed an ancient custom that a host had the obligation to protect his guests at all costs. Second, Lot was affected by the wicked culture that it was fine to sacrifice his own children. But how can you

please some vicious bullies who were determined to attack innocent people? They would not give up unless they satisfied their evil appetite. Just then, the angels pulled Lot back into the house. They also made the people blind so that they could not even find the entrance. The scene was noisy and chaotic. It cannot be clearer that homosexual activity was their intent. In fact, Sodom is so well-known for the sin that we now call such behavior as Sodomy. God strongly prohibits such sin in the Bible. His command can be found in Leviticus 18:22 and Romans 1:26-27. Some of you know that sin can be defined as “missing the target.” You cannot get a full score if you do not hit the bullseye when shooting an arrow. We cannot live up to God’s perfect standard because we are sinners. An alternative meaning of sin is to satisfy a natural need in a way God forbids. For instance, going to work is a proper way to make a living. Whereas, stealing is not only a crime, it is also a sin. Other examples are worshipping the one true God versus bowing to idols, and having babies from a marriage versus getting pregnant outside of a marriage. The world tells us that a homosexual relationship is just a different lifestyle. People should freely choose whether they prefer a partner of the same or opposite gender, with or without marriage. They say it is an expression of love! There is nothing wrong as long as people do not hurt anyone. How should Christians look at the matter? As we said earlier, homosexual behavior is one of the many sins. Only God has the right to judge people. We are only referring to God’s law when we call something a sin. We need to remember that we were ignorant sinners before Jesus saved us. We can accept people without condoning their sins. Only Jesus has the power to wash away all of our sins. The core of all sins is pride. It is the desire to live a self-centered and not a God-centered life. People with such mentality want to do whatever they like. However, we give up the ownership of our life to Jesus when we accept Him. That is why we call Him Lord. From now on it is no longer my interests, my choices, my body and my life. Everything we have are gifts from God. We use all that He gives us for the sake of His glory.

2. 勸告 Persuasion

Sodom and Gomorrah were doomed for destruction due to people’s perversion. But God gave them a final chance to repent. We see people react differently to the last persuasion. Listen to **verse 12-17**. The two angels told Lot to inform family members to run for their lives. He thought of his two future sons-in-law. Verse 14 tells us their response: **...“Up! Get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city.” But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.** The two men thought Lot was kidding. They might think: “What destruction? There is no sign. Everything is as usual. People are still having fun.” They totally rejected the threat. The two messengers urged Lot to gather his wife and two daughters and leave right way. But Lot was hesitant. Look at verse 16: **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.** The angels had to grab Lot’s family by hand and pull them out. Why was Lot reluctant to leave? Perhaps he did not want to give up on what Sodom could offer. It could be factors like the convenience of city life, business partnership he built with the locals and the future marriage life of his two daughters. Besides some personal reasons, 2 Peter 2:7-8 give us another possibility: **7 ...he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked 8 (for as that righteous man lived**

among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard). Peter describes Lot as a righteous man. He did not blend in to the immoral culture of Sodom. He was crushed in his heart by what he saw daily. He might try to persuade his neighbors to turn to God just like he persuaded his future sons-in-law. Throughout history, God keeps sending out gospel messengers. For example, Paul wrote two letters to encourage his disciple, Timothy. He gives the young evangelist some final remarks in 2 Timothy 4:2-4 – **2 Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.** We can substitute “preach the word” with “share the gospel.” God gives the task to every Christian. Paul told Timothy to seize every opportunity and use different approaches to do so. However, Paul cautioned Timothy upfront that people would not listen. We may ask: then why bother? For one, he encouraged Timothy so that he would not to be frustrated by the lack of results. It was not because he did not work hard enough, but it was because his listeners would not believe. For the same reason, we should not be surprised when people show little interest or even turn hostile when we tell them about Jesus. We might behave the same way before we became Christians! Our goal is not to convert people. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to cause repentance. Our objective is to convey the message, and let God work in people’s hearts. The world will only turn colder to the gospel. Satan floods people’s minds with treasures and pleasure. They are too busy earning money, then spending money. The only future in their minds is retirement but not eternity. Christians can buy into the same lies too if we are not careful. Why do we chase after things that cannot be carried to heaven? Why are we hesitant to let go of stuff that is temporary? We live in a fallen world. However, in our minds we must flee from “Sodom.” We can attract people to Jesus only when we are changed inside and out to be more like Him. We can have true joy even when we suffer loss, we have true peace despite the threats around us and we have a real hope no matter how corrupt the world will become. Our witness can be more effective when people see that our manner aligns with our message.

3. 審判 Perdition

God had determined to destroy Sodom because of the perversion of its people. We see final persuasions urging people to escape from the coming catastrophe. Eventually, perdition happened. The angels told Lot’s family to flee to the mountains. However, Lot reasoned that they could not make it in time. Therefore, he asked the angels for permission to take shelter at a nearby town called Zoar. We pick up the reading from **verse 23 to 29**. God’s judgment began soon after Lot’s family reached Zoar. God rained down burning sulfur from the sky to consume Sodom and Gomorrah. Flammable natural resource in the area helped spread the fire. Genesis 14:10 tells us: **Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits...** Bitumen is a waterproof substance. At that time people used it as a sealant for roofs and boats. It is combustible in nature. The fire from the sky and fuel on the ground quickly consumed the two cities. Sadly, Lot’s wife did not survive. Verse 26 says: **But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.** She perished because she disobeyed the angel’s

clear warning. Why did she look back? Was she curious about what was happening? Or was it because she could not let go of Sodom? Perhaps both. But Lot was spared from the catastrophe due to God's faithfulness. God remembered the prayer of Abraham to protect righteous people. The man witnessed a spectacular display of God's holiness. It reinforces the notion that sin has a consequence. This is the second large scale judgment from God. The first one being Noah's flood. Both catastrophes point to God's final judgment at the return of Jesus. The Lord mentioned it multiple times in the gospels. For example, Jesus talked about the future disasters in Luke 17. Then He refers to the flood in verses 26-27: 26 "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. 27 They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." The water came suddenly and covered the whole world. Next, Jesus relates that to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in verses 28-30: 28 "Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot – they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, 29 but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all – 30 so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed." Just like the flood, fire came down without notice and consumed everything. In both cases, people did not believe God's judgment was coming. Therefore, they continued a normal life and did nothing to protect themselves. Jesus warned us that the situation will be very similar at His return. He will come suddenly, and His judgment will be quick and complete. God will use fire instead of water to cleanse the world. Everything visible will be burned away. The only valuable item remains is your soul. The question is: how can we get ready for Jesus' arrival? Our mentality should not be: eat, drink and be happy for life is short. Christians should not be pessimistic and lazy either, thinking that the world will come to an end anyway. Rather, we should live today's life with a heavenly perspective. We work hard in our responsibilities, knowing that we serve our Heavenly Boss by serving the earthly boss. We understand that the future reward from God is much more worthy and long-lasting than any raise, promotion and year-end bonus. We can enjoy the fruits of our labor and relationships without turning them into idols and the only goals in life. Though we live in the world, our mindset should not be polluted by the world.

結論 CONCLUSION

Since God is holy and righteous, He will deal with sin. Once there was a warning that a forest fire was approaching a residential area. People immediately grabbed all they could and escaped. After the disaster, home-owners returned to their houses to salvage personal belongings. Items that were valuable before now became ashes, otherwise they were deformed in the heat. One lady noticed something intact under the debris. It was a ceramic vase. She wondered why it was not burnt up. The reason is simple: the vase went into the furnace when it was made from clay. After it had gone through the heat once, it can withstand a fire. As Christians, we should not be afraid of the coming judgment. It is because Jesus took the heat for us. He suffered and died for our sins. But He rose three days later. Jesus can make you fire-proof for God's judgment too. Confess your sins to Him, and receive Him by faith as your Savior and Lord. The result will be forgiveness of sin and eternal life.

引言 INTRODUCTION

今天的經文提到的災難是所多瑪和蛾摩拉的毀滅。上次我們看到神和兩位天使以人的樣式顯現，到了亞伯拉罕的家。神告訴亞伯拉罕，那兩座城市即將面臨審判。於是亞伯拉罕便懇求神的憐憫。他請求神若在城中找到一定數量的義人，就饒恕那地所有的人。亞伯拉罕從五十人開始懇求，一直減到十人。之後，兩位天使繼續前往所多瑪。今天故事的焦點放在亞伯拉罕的姪兒羅得身上。一連串的事件肯定了亞伯拉罕對神的認識：因為神是聖潔公義的，祂必然對罪施行審判。這段經文談到性關係，特別是同性戀的傾向。神將同性行為定義為罪。然而，在我們譴責同性戀之前，我們必須認識到：我們都是罪人，只是所犯的罪不同。如果沒有神的恩典，我們都將面臨審判。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 敗壞 Perversion

神打算毀滅所多瑪和蛾摩拉，是因為當地的人的敗壞行為。讓我來讀創世記第十九章**第 1 至 11 節**。那天晚上，兩位天使來到所多瑪。羅得正好坐在城門口，他看見了陌生人，便邀請他們到自己家中住宿。他很清楚，在外面過夜是非常危險的。他為客人預備了無酵餅，可能是因為來不及發麵。羅得的款待與當地人的敵意形成對比。城裡所有的男人，無論老少，都從四面八方跑來，圍住羅得的家。第 5 節告訴我們他們的目的：**呼叫羅得說：「今日晚上到你這裡來的人在那裡呢？把他們帶出來，任我們所為。」**這裡「任我們所為」在希伯來原文的直接翻譯是「讓我們認識他們」。難道他們想和這兩位旅客一起喝咖啡、聊天認識彼此嗎？在希伯來文和希臘文中，「認識」這個字可以代表性關係。你可以參考創世記 4:1 和馬太福音 1:25 等例子。那群人是想與這兩位來客發生親密關係。我們可以從羅得在第 7 至 8 節的回應中得到印證：**7「眾弟兄，請你們不要做這惡事。8 我有兩個女兒，還是處女，容我領出來，任憑你們的心願而行；只是這兩個人既然到我舍下，不要向他們做什麼。」**一位父親竟願意拿自己未出嫁的女兒來交換兩位陌生人，這是令人難以置信的！羅得的建議背後可能有兩個原因：第一，他遵循古代的風俗，主人有責任不惜一切代價保護客人；第二，他受到當地邪惡文化的影響，認為犧牲自己的孩子也無所謂。但是，如何能取悅那些兇惡的暴徒？他們決心要攻擊無辜的人，不達到目的不罷休。就在這時候，兩位天使把羅得拉進屋裡，並使那些人眼瞎，使他們連門口都找不

到。可以想像當時的場面嘈雜混亂。毫無疑問，居民的意圖就是同性行為。事實上，所多瑪這個地方因它的罪而臭名遠揚。同性行為 (Sodomy) 這個字就是從所多瑪 (Sodom) 演變而來的。神在聖經中強烈禁止這種罪。神的命令可以在利未記 18:22 和羅馬書 1:26–27 找到。有些人知道，罪可以定義為「偏離標準」。射箭時若未射中靶心，就不能得滿分。因為我們本是罪人，我們也無法達到神完美的標準。另一種對罪的理解是：以神不允許的方式來滿足人的需求。例如，靠工作賺錢是正當的謀生方式，而偷東西不但犯法，也是犯罪。其他例子包括：敬拜獨一真神與拜偶像的對比、在婚姻關係中生孩子與在婚姻之外懷孕的差別。這個世界告訴我們，同性關係只是另一種生活形態。人可以自由選擇同性或異性的伴侶，結婚與否也無所謂。他們說，這是愛的表達！只要不傷害他人，就沒什麼問題。那麼，基督徒應如何看待這個問題？正如剛才所說的，同性行為是眾多罪行之一。唯有神有審判人的權柄。我們稱某樣事情為罪，只是引用神的律法。我們要記得，在耶穌拯救我們之前，我們也是無知的罪人。我們可以接納別人，而不認同他們的罪。唯有耶穌有能力洗淨我們一切的罪。所有罪的根源都是驕傲。那是一種以自我為中心、不以神為中心的心態。這樣的人只想隨心所欲地生活。然而，當我們接受耶穌時，必須把生命的主權交給祂。因此，我們稱耶穌為主。從此之後，不再是「我的利益」、「我的選擇」、「我的身體」、「我的生命」。我們的一切，都是神所賜的禮物。我們要用祂所給我們的所有資源來榮耀祂。

2. 勸告 Persuasion

所多瑪和蛾摩拉因人們的敗壞行為而注定要被毀滅，但神仍然給他們最後一次悔改的機會。我們看到人們對這最後的勸告有不同的反應。請聽創世記第十九章第 12 至 17 節的記載。兩位天使告訴羅得，要通知他的家人趕快逃命。他想到兩位未來女婿。第 14 節告訴我們他們的反應：...「你們起來離開這地方，因為耶和華要毀滅這城。」他女婿們卻以為他說的是戲言。他們以為羅得在開玩笑。他們可能心裡想：「什麼毀滅？沒有任何徵兆呀？一切都很正常，人們照樣在享樂。」他們完全否定這個警告。兩位天使催促羅得趕緊帶著妻子和兩個女兒離開，但羅得卻猶豫不決。請看第 16 節：但羅得遲延不走。二人因為耶和華憐恤羅得，就拉著他的手和他妻子的手，並他兩個女兒的手，把他們領出來，安置在城外。天使甚至要抓住羅得一家人的手，把他們拉到城外。為什麼羅得不願離開呢？也許他不想放棄所多瑪的花花世界。可能是因為城市生活很方便，他與當地人建立了商業關係，或是他想到兩個女兒將來的婚姻。除了這些個人因素之外，彼得後書 2:7–8 給我們另一個可能性：7 只搭救了那常為惡人淫行憂傷的義人羅得。8 因為那義人住在他們中間，看見聽見他們不法的事，他的義心就天天傷痛。彼得形容羅得是一個義人。他並未與所多瑪人同流合污，

而是因為每天所看到的罪而痛心。他也可能像勸自己的未來女婿一樣，努力勸鄰居回轉歸向神。歷世歷代以來，神不斷差遣福音使者。例如，使徒保羅寫了兩封信鼓勵他的徒弟提摩太。在提摩太後書 4:2-4 中，保羅給這位年輕的傳道人一些最後的提醒：**2 務要傳道，無論得時不得時，總要專心；並用百般的忍耐，各樣的教訓，責備人、警戒人、勸勉人。3 因為時候要到，人必厭煩純正的道理，耳朵發癢，就隨從自己的情慾，增添好些師傅，4 並且掩耳不聽真道，偏向荒渺的言語。**我們可以將「傳道」理解為「傳福音」。這是神給每一個基督徒的使命。保羅吩咐提摩太要抓住每一個機會，並用不同的方式來分享信仰。然而，保羅也事先提醒提摩太：人們是不會聽的。我們可能會問：那為什麼還要傳呢？保羅鼓勵提摩太不要因為別人沒有反應而感到灰心。問題不是因為他沒有盡力，而是因為聽眾選擇不信。同樣，當我們向人傳講耶穌時，如果他們毫無興趣甚至表現反感，我們也不應該覺得驚訝。我們自己在信主之前，也可能抱同樣的態度！我們的目標並不是要讓人信主，因為唯有聖靈才能使人悔改。我們的責任是忠實地傳遞信息，然後讓神在人的心中動工。這個世界對福音的態度只會越來越冷淡。撒但利用財富與享樂充滿人們的心。他們忙於賺錢，然後忙於花錢。他們想到的未來是退休，而不是永恆。如果不小心，基督徒也可能會相信這些謊言。我們為什麼要追求那些帶不進天堂的東西？為什麼捨不得那些短暫的事情？我們活在一個墮落的世界，我們的心思意念必須脫離「所多瑪」。唯有當我們從內心到行為都更像耶穌時，才能吸引人來歸向祂。我們縱然在挫敗中仍有真正的喜樂，縱然面對威脅仍有真正的平安，縱然世界再怎麼敗壞，我們仍有真實的盼望。當人們看到我們的行為與我們的信息一致時，我們的見證就更有影響力。

3. 審判 Perdition

因為所多瑪居民的敗壞行為，神決定毀滅這座城市。祂差派天使最後一次勸告人們逃離即將來臨的災難。最終，審判降臨了。天使吩咐羅得一家逃到山上。然而，羅得認為他們來不及跑到那裡，因此懇求天使讓他們在一個名叫瑣珥的小城躲避。接下來，讓我們讀創世記第十九章**第 23 至 29 節**。當羅得一家抵達瑣珥之後不久，神的審判就開始了。神從天上降下硫磺與火，毀滅了所多瑪和蛾摩拉。當地易燃的資源使火勢的很快蔓延。創世記 14:10 告訴我們：**西訂谷有許多石漆坑...**。石漆是一種防水的材料，當時人們把它塗在屋頂或船的外面。石漆是一種易燃的物品。天上的火配合地面的燃料，使這兩座城市迅速被燒毀。很可惜，羅得的妻子也喪失生命。第 26 節記載：**羅得的妻子在後邊回頭一看，就變成了一根鹽柱。**她違背了天使明確的警告。她為什麼要回頭看？是出於好奇？還是因為她捨不得所多瑪？也許兩個原因都有可能。但羅得因著神的信實被保存下來。神記念亞伯拉罕的禱告，保護了義人。羅得親眼見證了神

聖潔的彰顯，這再次證明：罪必然有它的後果。這是神第二次大規模的審判，第一次是挪亞時代的洪水。這兩次災難都預表將來主耶穌再來時的最後審判。主在福音書中多次提到這一點。例如，在路加福音第 17 章中，耶穌談到末後的災難，祂在第 26-27 節提到挪亞的洪水：26「挪亞的日子怎樣，人子的日子也要怎樣。27 那時候的人又吃又喝，又娶又嫁，到挪亞進方舟的那日，洪水就來，把他們全都滅了。」洪水來得突然，淹沒全球。接著，耶穌又將挪亞的洪水與所多瑪的毀滅相提並論，在第 28-30 節中說：28「又好像羅得的日子；人又吃又喝，又買又賣，又耕種又蓋造。29 到羅得出所多瑪的那日，就有火與硫磺從天上降下來，把他們全都滅了。30 人子顯現的日子也要這樣。」就像同洪水一樣，火也是在毫無徵兆的情況下突然降下，把一切燒毀。在這兩個事件中，人們都不相信神的審判即將來臨，因此繼續照常生活，完全沒有做預防措施。耶穌警告我們，祂回來的時候也會是如此。祂會突然降臨，而祂的審判是迅速而徹底的。神將會用火而非用水來潔淨這個世界。凡眼所能見的事物都將被燒盡，唯一剩下最寶貴的東西就是你的靈魂。那麼，我們應該如何為主的再來做好準備呢？我們不應該抱著「吃喝快樂，因為人生苦短」的心態。同樣地，基督徒也不應該悲觀或懶惰，認為世界遲早會結束，不必努力生活。我們乃是應該以天國的眼光來過地上的生活。我們認真工作，盡好本分，因為我們知道，透過服事地上的老闆，其實我們是在服事天上的主。我們明白，從神而來的獎賞遠比升職、加薪和年終獎金更有價值，也更持久。我們可以享受工作的成果和珍惜人際關係，但我們不把它們變成偶像或人生追求的目標。雖然我們活在世界中，但我們的思想與價值觀不應被世界污染。

結論 CONCLUSION

因為神是聖潔公義的，祂必然對罪施行審判。據說有人在某地區發出警告，說一場森林大火正在逼近。人們立刻帶著重要的東西逃命。災難過後，屋主們回到家中，看看還有什麼個人物品被保存下來。曾經是珍貴的東西，如今都已成了灰燼，或者被高溫下變形。有一位女士在瓦礫中發現了一樣完整無損的東西，是一個陶瓷花瓶。她在思考，為什麼這個花瓶沒有被燒毀？原因很簡單：當花瓶還是泥土的時候，必須放進火爐去烤。花瓶經歷過烈火的考驗之後，就有能夠承受火與高溫。作為基督徒，我們不需要懼怕即將來臨的審判。那是因為耶穌已經替我們承受了重大的煎熬。祂為我們的罪受苦、被釘死在十字架上，三天後復活。耶穌也能使你「防火」，在神的審判中站立得住。你必須向祂認罪，憑信心接受祂作為你的救主和生命的主宰。結果你的罪便得到赦免並且獲得永生。