

“Cordial Delight”

Sermon for 22 September 2019

Texts: Gen. 19:1-29; 2 Cor. 10:3-8 and Psalm 73

“Cordial Delight” is a noun phrase lifted from Psalm 73:28: **It is good for me to draw near to God.** “Good” here means “sweet, delightful and refreshing” to **draw near to God.** Desperate to find some way to convey the heart of Genesis, I came upon, or was inspired to use the illustration of our shoes. Not new shoes, mind you, but comfortable, worn in shoes—shoes that fit your feet through habitual wear. All of “our” shoes fit “our” feet and they do so in such a way that one pair of shoes can be used to identify another *because both point to the same wearer.* Our shoes are marked by habitual wear, they are moulded by the way we walk *as we walk.* Walking a mile in another man’s shoes is meant to suggest that we cannot “know” another without a working acquaintance with his walk—as impressed by his feet in his shoes and shaped by his weight and his gait. As someone who has purchased second-hand shoes, I can testify that *walking in another man’s shoes, like breaking in a pair of new shoes(!) can be uncomfortable.* It can lead to blisters unless you wear several layers of socks to attend the breaking in period. At the first, with second hand shoes, you are acutely aware that 1. these shoes belonged to someone else and 2. that his feet are not your feet!

Anyway, habitual wear led to walking habits, led to habituation and on to habitat and habitation. This family of words are all related. It makes one wonder about them, and leads to a deeper understanding of each of them. Then, I wondered about “rehabilitation.” How is rehabilitation, the restoration of health, and healthy habits related to people, shoes and walking. This is especially when we move on from shoes to Jesus’ habit of attending synagogue worship, or the habits of fishermen, Jesus’ habit of prayer, the first church’s habitual activities: **devotion to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer** (Acts 2:42). It is useful to think about these habits, this walk of discipleship—and in the last case, be led to ponder how we might conform our walk to that of the first Christians. Does the imitation of godly habits lead to the adoption of godliness? Our shoes vote “yes.”

What happens if we take this frame of mind, these thoughts about shoes, walking and habits, and apply them to Gen. 18-19? What we notice is that the shoes of Abraham differ from the shoes of Lot! For example, there is not such thing as Gen. 18:3-5 in Gen. 19. Gen. 18:3-5 depicts Abraham’s “cordial delight” in God. There is no such friendship, or fellowship in Gen. 19 between Lot and the divine personages that visit his home! I will quote Gen. 18:3-5:

3 and said, “My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by. 4 Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; 5 and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant.” And they said, “So do, as you have said.” (NASB)

or

3 O Lord God, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass away from Your servant. 4 Please let a little water be brought to wash your feet and support yourselves under the tree. 5 and I will take a morsel of bread, so that you may sustain Your heart; after that you may go on, since you have

come to Your servant purposefully.” And they said, “Do as you have said.”
(my translation of the more literal meanings of the Hebrew)

Whichever translation you prefer, I think, the friendship is apparent—there is an implicit invitation by Abraham to his divine guests that they feel free to sit a spell and enjoy communion *together* over a meal even. They are family! Therefore hospitality is more than a custom, it is a habit. This is what’s missing in Gen. 19. There Lot either misses out on appreciating who his guests are, or he does not take “cordial delight” in them at all. If we ponder that lack, we might ask which camp we fall into and then ask how we can move from Lot’s to Abraham’s habit of divine hospitality.

This matter is too important to shuttle aside. I propose to explore Psalm 73 this morning as a lens for examining Gen. 19. Then we will be positioned better to grasp two things: first that the friend of God has influence with God and, secondly, that what you believe has real life consequences—beliefs truly matter.

Psalm 73 depicts two opposing faith postures; that of the unbeliever/Lot and that of the friend of God/Abraham. Now the narrator, Asaph, is actually one person who undergoes a sea change, or *transformation of soul perspective* when he takes his eyes off the wicked and then fixes them back upon God, who is good. **Truly God is good to Israel.** At first blush this opening verse appears to be a declaration of truth. However, such a declaration, apart from “cordial delight” is somewhat less than is said. The **good** here means sweet, delightful . . . reviving, renewing and refreshing. So, we caught here a resonance of what Abraham meant in his hospitality (**rest yourselves . . . refresh your heart**—vv. 3 and 4)! He intended do to them **good** in response to the **favor** of their visitation.

Nothing could contrast more strongly than the intentions of Abraham’s heart versus the intentions of the **wicked** (or, sad to relate, Lot!). There is a familiarity to Abraham’s proffer of hospitality—a desire to be family, face to face and present—which is simply missing in the case of Lot. It might be worth pointing out at this point that Lot had ceased to be part of Abraham’s household and, consequently, may not have been circumcised *and, technically, would have been outside the covenant*. That alone would not explain the disparity between the hospitalities of Abraham and Lot. Lot has departed from the “cordial delight” in God and immersed himself in the world of material success—he was greedy for material advantage. This is seen in his choice of the best-looking land and his exchange of pastoral wealth for urbanized wealth. He sacrificed the meadows for the marketplace. It is possible that Lot was at the city gate negotiating the marriage of his daughters. He had, according to Scripture, four daughters, two who were already married, and two others, the virgins, who are presented as betrothed in Gen. 19. The former two, we may presume, perish in the **overthrow of Sodom** (as well as Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim—as supplied by Hosea 11:8—the fifth is unnamed, unless it be Zoar which is spared).

I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. (v.3) Asaph has to be moved from envy to pity and that only occurs after he enters into the presence of the Lord (**until I went into the sanctuary of God** (v.17) and is able to distinguish between their apparent present prosperity and **then I discerned their end** (v. 17). That end entails falling **into ruin, into destruction . . . and terrors** (vv.18-19); they are **swept away**. They perish in the terrible wrath of divine judgment.

Abraham, however, enters *the presence of the Lord* during the visitation. It is entirely pleasant! Lot does not appear to arrive at the same place. Instead Lot persists in identifying with the wicked: **he lingers**, his wife **looks back with longing**, his daughters perpetuate the **sexual depravity**—all the indications are, that when it comes to being wicked, Lot and his are “all in.”

Here is Lot’s “**O my Lords**” speech which contrasts sharply with Abrahams’ which we cited from Gen. 18:3-5:

18 But Lot said to them, “Oh no, my lords! 19 Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified your lovingkindness, which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, for the disaster will overtake me and I will die; 20 now behold, this town is near enough to flee to, and it is small. Please, let me escape there (is it not small?) that my life may be saved.” NASB

or

the speech ends with **that my soul may live**

The speech is not about what Lot might do to serve them, to cause them to **rest** and be **refreshed!** He does not look to God as his redemption, but looks to the creature, and to another “city” where he might persist in trade, marketing and the accumulation of wealth—and in habitual sin. Lot is a materialist. He puts all his stock in stocks and bonds. He is just as lost as the wicked, earthbound folk in Psalm 73: the **fat** and **sleek**, the **proud** and **violent**, those caught up in the **follies**, **who scoff and speak with malice . . . who set their mouths against the heavens and their tongue struts through the earth**. The habits of Lot’s heart are with the sin habits those who stormed his house: **Where are the men who came to you tonight. Bring them out to us, that we may know them—**meaning, “have sexual intercourse with them.” Who else would say, **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.** (vv. 5-6) Did Lot imagine that the mere exchange of a more natural sex act would render the rape of his daughters better than the rape of “angels” who, it would appear, he merely considered as human beings? You see there is much blindness here already: Lot is blind to who his guests are. And this is before the angels strike their would-be rapists with literal blindness! **They wore themselves out trying to find the door!** How bestial, brutish and sad!

Had Lot known who they were, the angels, a better course for him and his family might have been to throw open the door, bring forth the two and say, “Have at it, boys.” And having loosed the lustful men, observe what the angels of the Lord would do to those who would presume to attack, violate and defile the holy ones of God. Maybe the pyrotechnics would have proved unnecessary as the wicked would be annihilated. Of course, God did judge these **men of Sodom** along with all their debauched cohorts, **young and old with fire from heaven the next morning**. He took out the cities of sin wherein men had habituated themselves to wickedness. Let’s return to the shoe rack briefly. One point of this narrative is that Lot had put on his sin shoes and he was so used to walking in sin that he was attached to the sin habits of his city. His shoes were his identity. How you walk, where you walk and the shoes you choose to wear all matter. Abraham wore different shoes, he wore them with faith and they were fashioned of the good leather of

God's promises. We could say he walked in his *salvation shoes*. Like the pair of shoes are you wore to church. Or, do you want another pair, a new pair today? Do you want to exchange what you have on for what the Lord has to offer?

Back to the main message. Now we read Gen. 19:29: **And 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.**

Abraham interceded for Lot and it worked. It was the intercession of a righteous man that resulted in Lot's being spared—it wasn't what Lot deserved, it wasn't through any repentance that I can find in the text. It certainly wasn't about the shoes Lot had on! The friend of God has influence with God. Beautiful.

If we join Abraham on the sunrise of that fateful day, and we survey with him the smoldering ruins of the wicked cities God had **overthrown**, we would see utter ruins and desolation of the sin habitat **where Lot used to live**. There is nothing left to go back to! And that is just the point. When we repent of sin, the residue of sin, the burnt out shell of where sin resided, the old sin shoes we used to walk in, all the strongholds of sin need to be utterly demolished altogether—so there truly is no “going back.” This is the final phase of deliverance ministry. Yes, Lot is delivered that day—it is, unfortunately, only an external deliverance (he is **led by the hand** v.16). Compare that with Psalm 73:23-4: **Nevertheless I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. 24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.**

25 Whom have I in heaven but You?

And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.

26 My flesh and my heart may fail,

But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

27 For, behold, those who are far from You will perish;

You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.

28 But as for me, the nearness of God is my good;

I have made the Lord God my refuge,

That I may tell of all Your works.

Not only that but listen to what Jesus has to say about deliverance ministry of a related variety—demonic oppression, or infestation—on a more personal level:

24 “When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ 25 And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. 26 Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.”

Am I suggesting that deliverance from sin and deliverance from unclean spirits are similar? YES.

3 For though we walk in the flesh*, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but [are mighty before God] are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God,

and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

NASB

*Some translators render “flesh” as the “world”—a better phrase might be sin nature. We are sinners, but our weapons are of a “divine nature” and so are powerful for **the destructions of fortresses** (either the cities of Sodom without or the habits of sin within!). “Speculations” fortify themselves in our hearts and minds. They have to be dislodged, excised and the “fortresses” must be laid to waste. This last stage insures that there will be re-occupation by hostile forces (either sin or demons)—no exchanging of hands. False beliefs are also embedded in us.

Here then are some of the weapons we have to wage this warfare—which continues our whole life long. **Fight the good fight of faith** (1 Tim. 6:12) points to a reality, they are not merely words of exhortation. Far less are they empty words, but truth.

1. We have the faith as handed down to us by faithful witnesses
2. We have the Name of Jesus which is powerful/authoritative (**The Name above all names.** (Phil. 2:9) This name, said in faith causes demons to tremble and flee.
3. We have the blood of Jesus, which atones for and cleanses us from all sin.
4. We have the truth that God is love—that corrects all faulty views of God. He is our everlasting Father who never lets go of us.
5. We have prayer which includes the power to bind and cast out all that is repented of, all we are delivered from.
6. We have Jesus who is the way, the life and the truth—the truth is a person, the life is a relationship, the way is discipleship.
7. We have the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth, empowers and strengthens us. We are in-dwelt by the Spirit and his holiness expels evil.
8. We have the ordinances (communion and baptism)—spiritual food and drink.
9. We have the community of believers who stand ready to punish all disobedience when our repentance is complete.
10. We have the word of God as our standard. All we need to know of God is revealed in it, for our sakes and to his glory.

So, whether we are renouncing sin, or expelling an unclean spirit, or taking authority over devils, girded and armored for battle. It is not that we do not have these things, it is rather that we are not in the habit of using them. We do not hear, this is the way, walk in it very clearly if we are tangled in the briars. I know this about the briars, they are devilishly difficult to wiggle yourself out of—some do not make it. The briars never save us. This assures us that nothing creaturely has anything lasting to give us. But being friends with Jesus makes us influential with God—both for the rescue of others and for our own deliverance. Yes, Jesus saves and Jesus delivers. Wrong beliefs as well as ignorance. If you believe what I have preached today, it will change your life.

Amen