



Faith When All Is Doomed

Grace Reigns: God's Gospel for All Peoples Series # 28

Genesis 18:16 – 19:38

David Sunday

November 1, 2015

Let's pray.

Lord, thank You for Your family. Thank You for the fellowship of believers, for the Lord's Table that we're going to enjoy today, and for Your Word. You prepare a Table for us in the presence of our enemies. You anoint our heads with oil, and our cups overflow with blessing. We pray, Lord, that You would perform Your glorious deeds through those who are weak—that's me, that's us, Lord. In our weakness show Yourself strong and mighty.

Draw us closer to You through Your Word. We pray for the help of the Spirit, that we might hear and be transformed by what we hear, that we might listen as those who are listening to the oracles of the living God, and that we might preach in power by Your Spirit. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

I want to begin with a true-or-false statement:

The Great Commission is about holiness. God wants the world to know Jesus, believe Jesus and obey Jesus. We don't take the Great Commission seriously if we don't help each other grow in obedience.

That's what Kevin DeYoung says in his book, [The Hole in Our Holiness](#). Is that true or is that false? Anyone want to disagree with Reverend DeYoung?

It's a true statement. Some believers tend to emphasize holiness and neglect outreach, so become "holier than thou." Other believers tend to emphasize outreach and neglect holiness, becoming so worldly that no one can see the difference that the gospel is making in their lives.

The truth is these two go hand in hand: holiness and mission, mission and holiness. If you want to be on God's mission, you've got to be holy. And if you want to be holy, you've got to get on God's mission. Holiness and mission should never be severed.

We left off last week in verse 15 of Genesis 18, where Abraham has received a visit from the Lord and two angelic messengers who have come with a twofold purpose. Their first purpose is to confirm to Abraham and Sarah the promise that they will have a son through whom will come blessing to the nations. Their second purpose in coming is to announce that the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah—where Abraham's nephew Lot is living with his family—is so great, and their sin is so grave, that God is going to destroy these cities.

Let's pick up reading at verse 16 of Genesis 18:

¹⁶ Then the men set out from there, and they looked down toward Sodom. And Abraham went with them to set them on their way. ¹⁷ The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, ¹⁸ seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹ For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him." ²⁰ Then the Lord said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, ²¹ I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know."

Abraham lives like we do in a world that is rebelling against God. That word "outcry" is a word that speaks of a graphic cry for help. Sodom is described in Scripture as a city that had pride, an excess of food and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. Sodom was notorious for affluence, arrogance and callousness. They had lots of money, but they neglected the poor. Sexual immorality was rampant. Gang rape was not unheard of. The cruelty and oppression rose up as a graphic cry to God for help. God heard, God saw, God knew. He is coming to bring decisive judgment.

We live in a world that, like Sodom, is full of corruption, aggression, hostility, bloodshed and lust. This world as we know it in its antagonism toward God is doomed for judgment. The Apostle John tells us, in 1 John 2:17, "*The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*"

So when you see people on the streets holding placards that say, "The end is near!" you might think their method is not very winsome or effective, but the message is true. The end is near. How should God's people then live in this world? Should we be wringing our hands in despair? Should we be lamenting that our nation is not in its glory days anymore? Should we be denouncing the world for its wickedness? How should we live?

God gives us a clear vision of the way He wants us to be living in His words to Abraham in verse 19. Three things stand out in this verse:

- Election. God says to Abraham, “I have chosen him.” God has chosen us to be His people in Christ Jesus.
- Ethics. God has chosen Abraham that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice. So God has chosen him unto holiness. “Teach your children. Command your household to walk in the ways of the Lord. Do righteousness and justice. I have chosen you unto holiness.”
- The mission. God has chosen Abraham with a grand purpose in mind, that He may bring to him what He has promised him. What has God promised Abraham? Verse 18, “*Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.*”

This is the gospel according to Galatians 3:8, where the Apostle Paul says, “*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’*”

So what we have in Genesis 18 is the Lord and two angelic messengers coming to Abraham and Sarah, sitting down and having a meal in Abraham’s household, and affirming to Abraham and Sarah that although they were coming to bring destruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah, they wanted to remind them of the gospel that had been preached and promised: that blessing was going to come to the nations through Abraham.

So yes, judgment is going to come on Sodom and Gomorrah, but God has not forgotten the gospel. Blessing is going to come to the nations. He is going to make sure that His blessing flows as far as the curse is found, and He will rule the world in truth and grace and make the nations prove the glories of His righteousness and the wonders of His love (from Joy to the Word by Isaac Watts, 1719). He has not forgotten His promise.

This narrative is not just about God’s judgment on an ungodly world; it’s also about God’s salvation to a lost world. It’s about God keeping His promise until a great multitude that no one can count—from every nation, tribe, people and language—will gather before His throne to worship the Lamb Who is seated there.

Where do we fit into this? Election. Ethics. Mission. Get these three points in your mind. Election—we’ve been chosen by God for a purpose: that we might be used by Him to make His blessing known to our neighbors and to all the nations of the earth. We’ve been elected for a mission: to make known His Kingdom and His glory. But there’s a crucial link there in the middle, isn’t there? Ethics. The way we live. The way we teach our children to live. Following the way of the Lord. Doing righteousness and justice.

Anglican clergyman Christopher Wright wrote an article in Christianity Today this month called, "Good Behavior Matters After All." He said the way we live and the way we teach our children to live are vital to God's mission thriving through us. I want to read a portion of this article because it summarizes verse 19 so well.

He begins, "Ethics is the hinge between election and mission. Election is meant for ethics." God has chosen you that you may live a holy life. Ethics is meant for ethics, and ethics is meant for mission. He wants us to live holy lives so that His ways may be known to the nations. Wright continues:

Christian obedience, then, is never simply a matter of "me and my conscience and God." How we conduct ourselves, as individuals and as a community, either fosters or hinders God's promise. When we fail to walk in God's ways, when we fail to do what is right and just, when we don't live any differently than the people in Sodom and Gomorrah, we are frustrating God's mission.

Now, we can't thwart God's mission, but we can hinder it. Ethics is the "hinge." Wright concludes, "How we act does not save us, to be sure. But how we live as God's people is the vital link between our calling and our mission. There is no biblical mission without biblical ethics."

I want to trace that thought through the narrative in Genesis. As the mission advances, bear in mind how vital it is that we not sever holiness from mission. We're going to see an example of what happens when holiness is neglected.

1. The Mission Starts with Intercession

Abraham's mission starts with intercession (Genesis 18:22). He approaches God not as a lobbyist, not as if God were a cosmic ATM, but with reverence and humility. He pleads with God, the Judge of all the earth, not to destroy the righteous along with the wicked. He comes as a covenant child and draws near to the throne of grace. Let's listen in on his conversation with God:

²² So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord. ²³ Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? ²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" ²⁶ And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

²⁷ Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. ²⁸ Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." ²⁹ Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." ³⁰ Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." ³¹ He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it."

Old Testament scholar Derek Kidner says, "Abraham is feeling his way forward in a spirit of faith, exploring the range and the rightness of God's rule." The Expositor's Bible Commentary calls his prayer, "An audacious beating down of God." Abraham is certainly bold and daring.

This isn't the first time Abraham has intervened to spare Sodom. That happened back in chapter 14 as well. Abraham is starting to embrace his role in God's plan to bring blessing to the nations, and he understands that he needs to intercede on behalf of them. God is going to reassure Abraham of His justice—that He will not destroy the righteous along with the wicked.

But Abraham speaks up one more time in verse 32: "*Then he said, 'Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there.'*" Ten righteous people. Ten is the minimum number to form a synagogue in the city. "*Suppose ten are found there.*" God answered, "*'For the sake of ten I will not destroy it.'* And the Lord went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place."

The mission starts with intercession. God's people function as salt and light in this world. The presence of Spirit-filled, righteous people in a community can preserve that community from judgment. God's people are a praying people. Our intercession is something God uses to bring grace and blessing to our neighbors and to our nation. So do you pray for your neighbors? Do you intercede for the nation?

There are needs in our church we need to pray about. We heard from our missionaries Dave and Pam Wilson that they're having a terrible time getting a visa to stay in Turkey. We need to pray for that. Pray for Nabil, a pastor in northern Iraq whom Bill says needs supernatural protection right now. Pray for Fatima, a sister in Christ who's been imprisoned unjustly and whose sentence may be reduced this week. Pray for the Rejan people in Sumatra, where there is no gospel church for a whole people group...yet.

Pray. Intercede. Intercede for your neighbors who are content to live in this world without God, without hope. Intercede for your loved ones. A powerful stimulus to intercessory prayer is the realization of how urgent and dire the fate of the unbelieving world is.

If our prayers for lost neighbors and nations around the world are feeble and infrequent, could it be that we've stopped believing they're really lost? Could it be that we've lost sight of the doom that awaits those who will not repent and believe the gospel? Abraham is praying in view of God's judgment. Presbyterian pastor Ligon Duncan has some searching words:

Intercessory prayer is only effective when one realizes how awesome the judgment of God is. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to pray effectively for lost souls if one is not convinced that lostness will ultimately result in literal, eternal punishment.

Do you believe in hell? Do you believe in literal eternal punishment? Do you believe that lost people are heading to an eternity of nothing but anguish—without God, without light, without warmth, without friendship, without peace, burning with lust that will never be satisfied, thirsting with a thirst that will never be quenched, famished with a hunger that will emaciate their souls forever? Do you believe in the judgment of God? If you do, you will intercede for the lost. Mission starts with intercession.

2. Lot, the Reluctant Pilgrim

At the end of chapter 18 we're left wondering: will there be ten righteous people in that city? Will there even be one righteous person? Chapter 19 introduces us to Lot, the reluctant pilgrim, who reappears in the narrative beginning in verse one:

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth² and said, "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the town square."³ But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

There's a reason Lot presses them so strongly. There's a reason he's alarmed at the thought of them spending the night out in the town square. It's because he knows what happens in the town square in the middle of the night in Sodom—and before long, they're going to know. They're going to be confronted with the filth and debauchery that is characteristic of that city.

⁴ But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. ⁵ And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them."

A mob of men is pressing in on Lot's house, intending to rape the angelic messengers who are inside. The sin of homosexuality is a particularly heinous offense in the eyes of God. It's listed in the Law, along with incest and bestiality as a capital offense. The New Testament is equally forceful in its condemnation of this sin, and at the same time full of hope for forgiveness and cleansing for anyone who will believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The worst sin is not the sin of homosexuality. The worst sin is hardening your heart to the gospel and refusing to repent and believe in the Savior. The worst sin in Sodom is the refusal to listen to the warnings of judgment and the wrath that is to come, rather than receiving salvation.

Before we read further, it's important to see what the Apostle Peter tells us about Lot. He says Lot was tormented in his soul over the sinfulness of his neighbors. In the second chapter of 2 Peter, Peter is talking about the flood and Noah and the destruction of Sodom. There are many parallels in Genesis between these two stories.

⁶ If by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; ⁷ and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked....

So in his soul, Lot is not happy with what he's seeing going on in his community.

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); ⁹ then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, ¹⁰ and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones.

I think Peter has in mind this episode right here at the doorstep of Lot's household, as bold and willfully defiling men don't tremble as they're blaspheming holy messengers from God inside Lot's house. What does Peter tell us about Lot's character? Righteous. And as if to emphasize it, he says it three times. Believe it or not, Lot is righteous.

It's got to be by faith, because as you read the account in Genesis you might scratch your head, wondering, "How could he be a righteous man?" There's a whole lot of contradictory evidence. But by the mouth of Christ's apostle, this man was simultaneously a sinner and a saint.

He's righteous by faith—but what a mess he made of his life! What a disaster his family was. What a failure at being a witness for righteousness in the midst of the wicked city. Yes, Lot was chosen by God—one of the elect. But he failed to advance God's mission because he did not take holiness seriously. He was a reluctant pilgrim, too in love with the world.

It was hard to extract him from Sodom, and it was even harder to extract Sodom from him. It's reprehensible what we read next, how Lot tries to appease the mob. In Genesis 19:6 we read, "*Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, 'I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly.'*"

I cannot fathom, having daughters myself, what we read in verse eight. There is no excuse. "*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.*"

A theme is emerging. Here is this man, Lot—this "righteous man"—who wanted to get comfortable in the world. And the worst place for a righteous person to be is trying to be at home in this world. It's impossible. It forces you to compromise and make horrendous decisions that are going to be ruinous in their consequences.

Lot, leaning on his own understanding, trying to negotiate a world in which he has become all too comfortable, ends up pleasing no one. He endangers his daughters, he enrages his neighbors, and finally, he requires rescue from the very messengers he's trying to protect. Verse nine: "*But they said, 'Stand back!' And they said, 'This fellow came to sojourn [among us].'*" They never really welcomed Lot into their city.

Believer, you will never really be welcome in this world. Get used to it. We do not fit in here. Can you handle that? "This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge!" The world hates it whenever inconsistent, hypocritical believers suddenly try to enforce their faith on the community around them. "Who made you judge? We've see how you live. What makes you think you're so different?"

"*Now we will deal worse with you than with them,*" they say. "*Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door down.*" But in mercy, God intervenes through His angels:

¹⁰ But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door. ¹¹ And they struck with blindness

the men who were at the entrance of the house, both small and great, so that they wore themselves out groping for the door.

As I read those words, I remember the Apostle Paul's description of our salvation in Titus:

We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy. (Titus 3:3-5)

As I see the angels pulling Lot into the safety of the house, I'm reminded of Jesus giving Himself for our sins "to deliver us from the present evil age" (Galatians 1:4). We've been rescued that we might become rescuers of others. We see Lot trying to do that in verse 12:

¹² Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. ¹³ For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it." ¹⁴ So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, "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.

Could it be this is the first time they'd ever heard their future father-in-law speak seriously about the things of God? Could it be that never before had they heard him say anything that made them think fearing the Lord was important? And now, suddenly, listening to him talk about the fear of the Lord and the destruction and judgment, they just think, "He's got to be joking." They can't take him seriously.

What about you, my friend? Is there anyone in your life right now who would think you were joking if you were to tell them, "Yes. I'm a follower of Jesus. I believe in hell and a judgment from which we must flee"? Sometimes I think we don't testify for Christ because we are ashamed of the inconsistency of our lives. So rather than repenting, we silence our testimony out of shame.

Even after he was rescued that night, Lot is still reluctant to leave the following morning.

¹⁵ 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." 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. ¹⁷ 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.”¹⁸ And Lot said to them, “Oh, no, my lords.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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!”²¹ He said to him, “Behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken.²² Escape there quickly, for I can do nothing till you arrive there.” Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar [which means ‘little one’].

Lot lingered. He knew the awful condition of the city, with all its abominations—yet he lingered. He knew the fearful judgment that was about to fall. The angels had warned him that God had sent them to destroy the city—yet he lingered. He believed the danger was real and warned his family to escape—yet he lingered. He saw the angels of God standing there waiting for him and his family to flee, and heard the messengers of judgment say, “Up! Escape!”—but he lingered.

In the words of J.C. Ryle:

He was slow when he should have been quick, backward when he should have been forward, trifling when he should have been hastening, loitering when he should have been hurrying, cold when he should have been hot.

Many Christians are just like him.

They believe in heaven, yet seem faintly to long for it, and in hell, yet seem little to fear it. They love the Lord Jesus; but the work they do for him is small. They hate the devil; but they often appear to tempt him to come to them. They know the time is short; but they live as if it were long. They know they have a battle to fight; yet a man might think they were at peace... They are all brethren and sisters of Lot. They linger.

I'm reminded that salvation belongs to the Lord alone. It has to because if salvation were left to us, we'd lean over the flames of destruction until they swallowed us alive. We'd linger and wouldn't flee. But God mercifully saved Lot. The angels grabbed him and carried him away.

It's a picture of our salvation. We weren't looking for God—He came to rescue us. We weren't seeking Him—He found us. We weren't walking toward Him, but were running toward the pit of hell—and He intervened. He saved us, not because of works that we've done in righteousness, but according to His mercy (Titus 3:5).

We read of the destruction in verse 23:

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.*

This was a place of petroleum, bitumen, salt and sulfur, but this was not a natural disaster. The Lord reigned down fire from heaven and destroyed the city.

Verse 26, *“But Lot’s wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.”* Jesus said, *“Remember Lot’s wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it”* (Luke 17:32-33). Remember!

3. Never Let Up in the Pursuit of Holiness

What’s the lesson the Lord wants us to take away from all this? It’s this: never let up in the pursuit of holiness. Never let up. Lot, who loved this world too much, tried to find his security here and ends up insecure and homeless in this world. *“Now Lot went up out of Zoar and lived in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to live in Zoar.”* My, how he has fallen.

Back in chapter 14, Abraham let Lot choose of the land. He chose the fertile land and pitched his tent facing Sodom. Then he had a house in Sodom. Then we find him *“at the gate”* which means he was one of the noblemen of the city. Then finally he said, *“Just let me live in that little place called Zoar,”* because he was afraid to live in the hills. Now he’s gone back into the hills because he’s afraid to live in Zoar. God’s people cannot find themselves at home in this world. We can’t get comfortable here.

Lot is living in a cave with his two daughters. I would have hoped that we had now reached the low point of Lot’s story—but we haven’t. The ending is the worst part of it all and stands as a sobering warning to us: never let up in the pursuit of holiness.

I hate to even read it, but I must:

³¹ *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.”* ³² *Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father.”* ³³ *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.*

And if that weren't bad enough:

³⁴ 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." ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ Thus both the daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father. ³⁷ The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day. ³⁸ The younger also bore a son and called his name Ben-ammi. He is the father of the Ammonites to this day.

Through their sin came Moab and Ammon—those names will go down in infamy in the history of God's story in the Bible.

What do we make of this? According to Peter, we have to believe that Lot had faith. I believe he's going to be in heaven. But tragically he failed to bring many people with him. No one was found righteous in Sodom through his witness and testimony. Sons-in-law thought he was joking. His wife turned back. His own daughters—whom he was willing to jeopardize for the sake of his guests—end up reducing their father to the utter depths of depravity and shame.

Here's the lesson. Sometimes people claim, "All that matters is that you go to heaven when you die. You're saved. That's all you need to care about."

Can I plead with you, friends? Don't think so foolishly. Don't think so selfishly. Don't be so shortsighted as to think your salvation is only about your soul and where you're going to spend eternity. God's plan and purpose is much grander than that, much higher, much nobler, much bigger than that. God has not saved you just to rescue you from hell at the end.

He has chosen you that you may influence your children, your household and your neighbors; that you yourself might keep the way of the Lord by doing justice and righteousness. Why? So that His blessing might come to all the nations of the earth. God has chosen you to be part of a mission to bring salvation to the nations and to your neighbors. And your holy life, your walking in obedience, is vital to that mission.

So I plead with you: don't frustrate God's purpose by living for yourself. Don't squander your calling by becoming infatuated with this world. Don't linger. Don't look back. Don't backslide, but if you do, repent. Don't lose your passion for the pursuit of holiness. Don't let your heart be hardened by this vain world and its futile pleasures, because, in the words of J.C. Ryle:

Grace is a tender plant. Unless you cherish it and nurse it well, it will soon become sickly in this evil world. It may droop, though it cannot die. The brightest gold will soon become dim when exposed to a damp

atmosphere. The hottest iron will soon become cold. It requires pains and toil to bring it to a red heat; it requires nothing but letting alone, or a little cold water, to become black and hard.

Let's pray.

O God, we plead with you, don't let our hearts become hardened. Don't let our love become cold. Don't let us become so comfortable and at ease in this world that we lose sight of Your Kingdom or Your glory. Don't let us become so selfish that we think only of where we're going to go after we die and forget how You want us to live right now where You've placed us, or forget why You've put us here.

O Lord, let blessing come through our lives to our neighbors, our nation and the nations of the world. Make this church vibrant with holiness and vital in mission. God, please purify and cleanse us of whatever might be frustrating Your purposes in our midst. Help us to teach and command our children and ourselves to do righteousness and justice and to walk in Your ways.

Lord, keep the iron of our faith red hot, we pray. Wherever we've grown cold, move in us by Your Spirit that we may take pains to become hot for You again. And meet us at this Communion Table, we pray, to renew in us a spirit of holiness for the sake of Your great name. Amen.

If you recognize yourself to be a sinner, this Communion Table says to you that for the sake of one righteous Man, God has made many sinners be counted righteous. Jesus died so that we might live. He took our sin and shame so that we might be robed in His righteousness and holiness. If you're trusting in Jesus, He says, "Come to Me." If you're not trusting in Him, don't come to the Table today, but come to Jesus. He is a Savior for you and He will save you today.

4. Prayer of Confession

Believers, as we prepare to come to the Lord's Supper, let's offer in unison this prayer of confession.

Lord Jesus, my soul and body are defiled by so many sinful deeds.
My tongue and my heart have run wild without restraint,
causing misery to others and shame to myself.
My soul bleeds with the wounds of wrongdoing, and my body is a
playground of selfish indulgence.
If I was to come before You as a judge, You could only condemn me to
eternal torment, for that is what I deserve.
Yet I come before You, not as my judge, but as my Savior.
I plead not on Your justice, but on Your mercy.
As you look upon the wretched creature that I am,
I ask that Your eyes be filled with compassion and forgiveness.

And as I sit at Your table, I beg You to renew within me a spirit of
holiness.

[by Ambrose of Milan, fourth century theologian]

Behold, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world and the sin of everyone who
believes in Him. Amen.

New Covenant Bible Church

4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175

(630) 584-2611 ♦ www.newcbc.org

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Text provided by sermontranscribers.net ♦ emily@sermontranscribers.net