

“Consequences of Backsliding – Part 2” (Genesis 19:18-38)

In this chapter we see two aspects of judgment. God is in the process of judging the sins of Sodom and also chastising His backslidden child. Despite his great failures, Lot is proof of the eternal security of the saints. Although Lot forsook the Lord, the Lord never forsook Lot. That does not mean that his life brought great glory to God. Lot is a classic example of the worldly saint of 1 Corinthians 3:15 that enters heaven with a wasted life, “*If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*”

And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. (v18-20)

Lot had been forced to leave Sodom but his heart is still longing for it. Even in the last minutes of the last hour he still wants to bargain with the two angels to be as close as possible to his former life. They had told him to “*escape to the mountain*” (v14) but he refuses to accept that command. Lot acknowledges the mercy extended to him, but begs to be allowed to stay nearby. Derek Kidner wryly observes, “Not even brimstone will make a pilgrim of him: he must have his little Sodom again if life is to be supportable.” Lot’s pathetic request is to go to a place called Zoar (meaning “small”). He argues, “*Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.*” The implication in his request seems to be that Zoar is just an insignificant place so there will not be great sins there.

And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. (v21-25)

With amazing condescension and longsuffering, the Lord did not argue any further with Lot’s request. Sometimes the Lord just leaves us to go our sinful ways and take the consequences that will flow from that. Lot should have got as far away from Sodom as possible. It had brought nothing but trouble to him. He should also have headed back to his spiritual uncle’s home. That would have been a blessing to him and his remaining family. They could have enjoyed fellowship with the saints of God there. Probably he did not want to do that as this would be too humbling to admit that he had made the wrong choices that day, which was recorded in Genesis 13:11.

WHY DID GOD DESTROY SODOM AND GOMORRAH?

In our time when militant homosexuality is rising around the planet, we must pause at this incident relating to this sordid sin. God gave His standards of sexual purity from the beginning of time. He sovereignly ordered that a man and a woman were to be “*one flesh*” in a lifelong covenant relationship (cf. Gen. 2:18-25; Mal. 2:14). The divine order is one of a complementary relationship between a man and a woman (cf. Matt. 19:4-6; Eph. 5:22-33). While adultery is a

perversion of God's sacred order for humanity, homosexuality is an inversion of God's fundamental design for human relationships (cf. Rom. 1:23-26).

Homosexuality is consistently condemned in the Bible as "*abomination*" (Lev.18:22), "*folly*" and a "*vile*" thing (Judges 19:23-24), "*unseemly*" (Rom. 1:27), "*them that defile themselves with mankind*" (1 Tim. 1:10), and "*going after strange flesh*" (Jude 7). Sodom and Gomorrah were cities that were consumed with that perversion of God's order (Gen. 19:4). It was an act of grace to the surrounding cities to wipe such a place of the planet to prevent them being infected with the values of Sodom. The Apostle warns of the consequences of such a lifestyle,

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6:9-10)

As a consequence of their brazen sin (cf. Isa. 3:9) which was rooted in their pride (cf. Ezek. 19:49-50), God judged the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as an example of eternal destruction, "*Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*" (Jude 7; cf. Rev 21:8). Sodom and Gomorrah symbolise in the Scriptures depravity and also God's judgment on sin.

IS THERE HOPE FOR HOMOSEXUALS?

The Bible makes it clear that homosexuality is a terrible sin. However, the Scriptures offer hope for any homosexual who truly repents from his or her sin. Freedom from the power of any sin comes through faith in Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit. In the church at Corinth, there were former Sodomites who had been changed by the power of the Gospel, "*And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*" (1 Cor. 6:10). Homosexuals do not need medical treatment or psychological help but to be touched by the power of the gospel.

Jesus Christ's power has not diminished, as He is "*the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*" (Heb 13:8). The gospel is still "*the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*" (Rom. 1:16). The blood of the Saviour can wash away every sin, as "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*" (1 Tim. 1:15). Paul calls himself the chief of sinners, and yet he found mercy at the cross (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15-16). There is hope for every homosexual to experience this change from the inside out, "*if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" (2 Cor. 5:17). A Christian can be tempted to sin in this area but there is always grace to overcome the temptation, "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*" (1 Cor. 10:13).

Christians are called to be always "*speaking the truth in love*" (Eph. 4:15). Therefore, our attitude and words to homosexuals must be a balance of condemnation for the sin and compassion for the soul of the sinner. However, our compassion for the sinner must never allow us to compromise the truth of the Bible. We must never deceive those who are perishing by diluting God's view of their sin. That balance is the essence of biblical love, as true love "*Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth*" (1 Cor. 13:6). God's wants homosexuals to be saved and

delivered from their sin. That is His plan for them. Neither homosexuality, adultery, nor any other kinds of sexual sins are outside of God's forgiveness, "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9).

But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt. (v26- 29)

The demise of Lot's wife is another tragedy in Lot's life. We are not told where he met her, but it could well be that she was a citizen of Sodom. She lost her life when just a few steps from safety. Like Abner, she died as a fool dieth. The angels had commanded her "*look not behind thee*" (v17) but she refused to submit to God's order. Her heart was too attached to Sodom to give up so easily. She loved darkness rather than light. Her swift judgment is used as a warning by the Lord Jesus in Luke 17:32 in one of the shortest biographical references, "*Remember Lot's wife.*"

Abraham looked toward Sodom not with the eyes of greed but with the eyes of pity. He witnessed the destruction of these cities of the plain. God honoured Abraham's intercessions for the righteous there and "*when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow.*" Although Abraham had ceased pleading to deliver the righteous at ten souls, the Lord went further in grace to His promise. This proves once again that "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*" (James 5:16). We see a marked contrast between Abraham and Lot in this whole narrative. Deffingbaugh observes,

"Lot, at best, was halfhearted in his relationship with God. Abraham had a growing intimacy, evidenced by his intercession for Lot. Lot cared mostly for himself, even to the point of sacrificing his daughters. Abraham cared more for others, evidenced by his generosity in giving Lot the choice of the land and in interceding with God for Lot's deliverance. Lot was a man who failed to learn from divine discipline. When he moved to Sodom and then was kidnapped, he returned to the same place without any apparent change in action or attitude. Abraham made many mistakes (sins), but he learned from them. Lot was a man who lived only for the present, while Abraham was a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth. He chose to do without many earthly pleasures for the joys of greater and more lasting blessings from God."

And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto 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 seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. And the first born bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of

the Moabites unto this day. And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Benammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day. (v30-38)

Lot escaped Sodom with nothing but the clothes on his back. His hopes of a peaceful life in Zoar were short-lived. We are told he got “*up out of Zoar*” because he “*feared to dwell*” there. It may well be that he feared the people would take retaliation on him for the destruction of Sodom or maybe he feared that a city originally destined for the same destruction because of its wickedness was not a safe place to reside.

Despite this gracious deliverance, Lot still refused to confess his sin. He had no peace in his heart. Lot did what he liked but he didn’t like what he did. Instead of humbling himself and returning to Abraham, who would have treated him with graciousness, Lot stubbornly wanted to stay away from the fellowship of spiritual saints. There certainly would be no problem of too many rival flocks and herdsmen now! If he had gone back and repented, doubtless, his uncle would have helped him in finding godly husbands for his two daughters.

The last OT record of Lot is a sordid episode of moral degeneration. The link between alcohol and immorality is once again brought into focus again in Genesis. There is a sad parallel with the final record of Noah after the Flood. Lot’s final loss was his daughters’ purity and his own dignity when in a drunken state he fathered two sons by incestuous relationships. The daughters’ desire for children was a good one but the manner in which they went about it was a terrible one.

Despite now being away from the city, his two daughters had imbibed the spirit of Sodom. They had learned sexual ethics could be set aside in a crisis from their father’s example (v8). On the flimsy excuse that they could not find husbands, Lot’s two daughters concocted a most abominable plan to conceive so they could be “*after the manner of all the earth.*” This was not accidental but a deliberate choice to engage in this evil. If they really knew God, they would have been content to trust Him to provide a godly husband in His time. The daughters’ plan worked and two sons were conceived. But the costs of such sin would be immense.

Lot feared the men of Zoar, Lot’s daughters feared being single, but no one in the home feared the Lord. That is the great tragedy of this home. Sodom was reborn in their lives. Sailhamer notes, “Ironically, in his own drunkenness Lot carried out the shameful act that he himself had suggested to the men of Sodom: he lay with his own daughters.” It must be generally observed that worldly parents seldom produce godly children.

A veil is placed over Lot’s remaining years on earth, but they cannot have been pleasant ones. His exit from this world must have been a gloomy one. Instead of having his grandchildren around him to enjoy and teach them God’s word, these children/grandchildren reminded him daily of his own folly. The children conceived from such a perverted union would live up to the manner of their birth by being perpetual enemies of God’s people and reknown for their immoral ways. Ironically, God later promised to destroy Moab and Ammon in the same manner as Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Zeph. 2:9). Lot’s daughters wanted to “*preserve seed of our father*” but they also preserved the sins of their father in subsequent generations. Lot’s enduring legacy to the world was a shameful testimony and also Moab and Ammon. He left a legacy, but not one to emulate for any believer.

CONCLUSION

Lot's life choices with their terrible consequences is a startling warning to us all that being a believer is not enough. Christians can fall into as quickly and as deeply into sin as the world around us. Their lives can become shipwrecked by compromise. A seemingly small decision in Genesis 13:12 caused all kinds of perverted results in his life and in the lives of his family members. A believer may imagine that his sins hurt no one but himself. Lot's account proves otherwise.

As he resided in Sodom, Lot lost the peace of God in his heart as "*in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds*" (2 Peter. 2:8). Putting God second in your life always results in the misery of a backslider. Matthew Henry observes this of Lot, "From the silence of scripture concerning Lot henceforward, we may learn that drunkenness, as it makes men forgetful, so it makes men forgotten; and many a name, which otherwise might have been remembered with respect, is buried by it in contempt and oblivion." Lot lost his wealth, reputation, testimony, livelihood, family, and his dignity. The man who set out to gain everything ended up losing everything. All of his years of carnal labour literally went up in smoke! In 24 hours he went from a respected city council leader to a destitute caveman! Ray Pritchard also notes,

"From the standpoint of the world, Lot won and Abraham lost. The clever nephew pulled a fast one on his doddering old uncle. But now the tables are turned. As Abraham stands and surveys the smoldering ruins of Sodom, ask yourself again, "Who won?" The answer is clear. In the end Abraham won it all and Lot lost it all. If you follow Lot and choose the way of the world, you will lose it all in the end. But if you follow Abraham and live by faith, though it may mean taking the lesser place in terms of worldly achievements, in the end you will be the winner."

Lot represents the ultimate picture of the worldly Christian who sets out to gain the world and finally loses it all. His life was conformed to the world (Rom. 12:2). Lot's failures can easily be that of ours also. All of us face critical decisions that will affect our future and that of our families. Think them through biblically and prayerfully. No man can serve two masters so choose which one! If you have backslidden, don't linger in your sinful state anymore. Get out of Sodom today and stay out. God is waiting to welcome you home. Remember the comforting words of the prophet Jeremiah, "*Only acknowledge thine iniquity*" and "*Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding*" (Jer. 3: 13, 22.)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What did Lot ultimately lose?
2. How should we witness to homosexuals?
3. Why do you think Lot found it so hard to repent?
4. How did Lot's sins impact on others?