

August 4, 2019

Lot — A Righteous Man Affected by Greed

“And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterwards would live ungodly: (7) and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (8) (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) - (9) then the Lord knows how to deliver the ungodly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment” (2 Peter 2:6-9.

The preceding scriptures are taken from a context in which the apostle Peter warned that even as there were *“false prophets among”* the people in the past there will be *“false teachers”* which will come among God’s people in the future, and that, sadly, many will follow *“their destructive ways,”* and *“because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed”* (2 Pet. 2:1-2). However, these *“false teachers”* will suffer the dire consequences of their evil ways and *“deceptive words!”* With this in mind, Peter then cited three Old Testament examples of those whom God punished for their evil deeds. He cited the example of *“the angels who sinned”* and who were *“cast down to hell and delivered..into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment”* (2 Peter 2:4). Then he stated that God *“did not spare the ancient world...bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly”* (2 Pet. 2:5; cf. Gen. 6-8). And he also stated that God turned *“the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes,”* and *“condemned them to destruction”* (2 Pet. 2:6; cf. Genesis 19).

However, the same God Who turned the wicked *“cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes”* also delivered *“righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked”* (2 Pet. 2:7). Cf. Genesis 19. Yes, in 2 Pet. 2:7 Lot was described as *“righteous;”* however, *“righteous”* people have been known to make some terrible, and even selfish decisions! Lot was such a person.

We first read of Lot in Genesis 11:27 wherein we learn that *“Haran begot Lot.”* Haran and Nahor were brothers of Abram (later called Abraham, Gen. 17:5), and sons of Terah. Terah took Abram, and Lot, and Sarai (Abram’s wife) *“from Ur of the Chaldeans”* to Haran where he died (Gen. 11:31-32). This brings us to Genesis 12 wherein God commanded Abram to go forth unto *“a land”* which He would *“show”* him, and promised to make of Him a *“great nation,”* and that through his seed *“all the families of the earth shall be blessed”* (Gen. 12:1-3). Abram immediately obeyed, taking his wife, Sarai, and *“Lot his brother’s son”* and went *“to the land of Canaan”* (Gen. 12:4-5). And upon their arrival in Canaan, *“the Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land’”* (Gen. 12:7). Later, because of a famine, Abram, Sarai, and Lot *“went down to Egypt,”* Gen. 12:10. While in Egypt, they prospered exceedingly, so much so that when he went *“up from Egypt,”* he was *“very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold,”* (Gen. 13:1-2). Lot also had prospered greatly, for he *“had flocks and herds and tents”* (Gen. 13:5). In fact, when combined, the land was not *“able to support”* the flocks and herds of both Abram and Lot, so Abram magnanimously said to Lot, *“Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right, or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left”* (Gen. 13:9). Lot should have insisted that his uncle Abram, to whom he was so greatly indebted, take the first choice. However, such was not his decision! He *“lifted up his eyes and saw all the*

plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere...like the garden of the Lord,” so he selfishly “*chose for himself all the plain of Jordan*” (Gen. 13:10-11). So he and Abram separated from each other; Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and “*pitched his tent even as far as Sodom*” (Gen. 13:12). However, “*the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord*” (Gen. 13:13).

Time passes. Lot is no longer living in “*the plain of Jordan;*” he is now living **in** Sodom! War between the respective “*kings*” broke out, and Lot was taken captive. Abram learned of Lot’s plight, so he took his “*three hundred and eighteen trained servants,*” and “*brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people*” (Gen. 14:9-16). And more time passed, and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah waxed worse and worse, so much so that God purposed to destroy those cities (Genesis 18). This brings us to Genesis 19 in which we learn of two angels in the form of men approaching Lot, and urging him to “*Escape for your life*” (Gen. 19:1-15). By this point in time “*Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom*” (Gen. 19:1), which was a place where men of standing and influence often made important decisions. Apparently, he was no longer an outsider!

Lot’s situation really began to deteriorate! The men of Sodom tried to “*know..carnally*” the men (angels) who came to Lot, and Lot tried in vain to resist them, but the two men (angels) struck these wicked men with “*blindness*” (Gen. 19:5-11). Lot appealed to his sons in law to “*get up and get out of this place,*” but to them “*he seemed to be joking*” (Gen. 19:14). Lot, his wife, and two daughters escaped out of Sodom, but his wife, in direct violation of a previous warning, “*looked back*” and “*became a pillar of salt*” (Gen. 19:26). Lot and his two daughters were afraid to dwell in Zoar, so they “*dwelt in a cave*” (Gen. 19:30). His two daughters, wanting to preserve “*the lineage*” of their father, conspired together. The first born of them influenced their father to drink wine, getting him drunk, at which time she committed incest with her father, and the next night the younger daughter did the same! Consequently, to those incestuous unions Moab and Ben-Ammi were born (Gen. 19:32-38), and from them descended the Moabites and Ammonites, who proved to be perpetual enemies of God’s people.

However, notwithstanding Lot’s bad decisions, he was not all bad! In fact, Peter described him as being “*righteous,*” and “*oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked,*” and that he “*tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds*” (2 Pet. 2:7-8). And because he was “*righteous*” God “*delivered*” him. He was “*vexed*” (KJV) as he saw and heard the “*lawless deeds*” of the people of Sodom where he had chosen to live.

And Lot serves as a warning to us! Of particular importance, his example illustrates the folly of being selfish and greedy! It was selfishness and greed that prompted Lot to choose “*for himself*” the “*well watered*” plain “*of Jordan*” (Gen. 13:10). He took undue advantage of Abram’s generosity. And little did he realize what it would eventually cost him!

Another warning from Lot to us **is the danger of placing emphasis on the wrong things.** He was thinking of good water, fertile soil, and green pastures. He did not pause to consider the moral and spiritual consequences of pitching his tent toward such a place as Sodom.

And his example provides **a warning against spiritual compromise.** He pitched his tent toward Sodom. Ultimately, he was a resident in Sodom. And, sadly Sodom entered his family — evidenced by the example of his sons in law, that of his wife, and his own daughters who made him drunk and committed incest with him. In a sense they out-Sodomed Sodom!

Other Lessons and Warnings From Lot

Lesson One: You cannot save the world by becoming a part of it! By pitching his tent toward Sodom, Lot was ultimately a part of Sodom. Though he was vexed by “*the filthy conduct of the wicked*” (2 Pet. 2:7), there is no evidence that he had any positive influence upon the wicked — evidenced by the mockery of his sons in law, and the conduct of his daughters.

Lesson Two: Lot’s decision illustrates the influence of evil companions on the righteous. Cf. I Cor. 15:33. His wife “*looked back*,” apparently not wanting to leave Sodom, notwithstanding how evil it was, and in spite of what God had promised to do to Sodom.

Lesson Three: Lot’s example illustrates the cost of a bad decision — especially a decision based upon selfishness and greed. Momentarily, he lost his freedom when captured by the Kings. He lost his home. He lost his wife. His daughters were a disgrace. His sons in law apparently had no spiritual character. He suffered untold misery. No amount of wealth could compensate for the moral degradation into which his family had sunk.

Conclusion: The Old Testament was written “*for our learning*” (Rom. 15:4). Indeed, there are many things we can (and should) learn from the example of Lot, “a righteous man affected by Greed.” It is much better to learn from the mistakes of others than having to suffer the consequences of our **own** mistakes!

—Bobby Witherington