

## **The Toll of Compromise 5-6-07**

Gen 19:30-38 (NIV)

*<sup>30</sup> Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. He and his two daughters lived in a cave. <sup>31</sup> One day the older daughter said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man around here to lie with us, as is the custom all over the earth. <sup>32</sup> Let's get our father to drink wine and then lie with him and preserve our family line through our father." <sup>33</sup> That night they got their father to drink wine, and the older daughter went in and lay with him. He was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.*

*<sup>34</sup> The next day the older daughter said to the younger, "Last night I lay with my father. Let's get him to drink wine again tonight, and you go in and lie with him so we can preserve our family line through our father." <sup>35</sup> So they got their father to drink wine that night also, and the younger daughter went and lay with him. Again he was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.*

*<sup>36</sup> So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. <sup>37</sup> The older daughter had a son, and she named him Moab; he is the father of the Moabites of today. <sup>38</sup> The younger daughter also had a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the Ammonites of today.*

When we look at the statistics of the behavioral patterns of those who claim to be born again Christians and those who do not, there is very little difference. The rate of divorce, the entertainment habits, even priorities in life tend to differ little. One of the surprises that came out of Barna Research group last year is that only 15% of regular church attendees ranked their relationship with God as their top priority in life. While 59% of American adults consider themselves a fulltime servant of God, only a quarter of them considered their faith as their highest priority. There is a disconnect going on. Somewhere down the road, we decided we could be deeply spiritual and but live to please self. A majority of Americans list family as their highest priority, almost the same percentage as our divorce rate. What's going on?

I once thought it all began in the 60s, but I'm learning that it began much earlier. It was a subtle, over time, influence of cultural compromise and prosperity. At the turn of the last century, many were dedicating their lives to missions, sailing off to lands from which they would likely never return. Many of the stories of Christian servants I admire took place at that time. Both the decade of the 20s and the 40s saw major shifts toward the acceptance of living as Christian without suffering or loss. The 60s was just the icing on the cake.

In 1900, to some, following Jesus meant you would leave your country and live in the third world where you would ultimately give your life for the cause of Christ. Many died in their first months in the mission field. In the 1930s that was still possible, but not as likely. Then it meant more of working it into another life, the life you had where your home was, kind of like an extended work trip. The 1950s worked a life for Christ into your pursuit of happiness. The death of Nate Saint and the other missionaries to the Auca Indians shook the world because we had gotten used to the idea of minimal personal sacrifice. As our affluence increased our willingness to truly

sacrifice waned. The 1970s many worked living for Jesus into your pursuit of fame and fortune. I'm speaking in generalities, of course some were completely dedicated and gave their all. But for the culture as a whole, Love the Lord your God with ALL your heart, soul, mind, and strength was interpreted as less and less. "All" went from meaning 100% to about 20% in a century, at least as far as our practical living application of it. In reality, "all" has never meant anything less than 100%. Now we even have the prosperity Gospel that declares living for God means that He will give you whatever your little heart desires. Luxury has lulled us into spiritual laziness. Dying daily has been watered down to mean giving up a TV series and maybe going to a Bible study once a week, if there is nothing else to do. I really don't look forward to going to India because I get sick of eating curry every meal. How pathetic is that!

Meanwhile, in third world countries, people are being tortured because they will not deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Somewhere along the development of American Evangelicalism we reinterpreted the words of the Apostle Paul that warned us that it will be through much hardship that we enter the Kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22) We reinterpret the Peter's answer, "We have left all to follow you." (Luke 18:28) We forget the psalmist said, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous," (Psalm 34:19) and settle for a little offering and church on Sunday. What will it take to turn us into fully devoted followers of Jesus?

Lot is the story of a believer who took the road of compromise. Living with Abraham, he was blessed and wealthy, but the wealth caused contention. (Genesis 13:6,7) He probably saw Sodom as a way to multiply that wealth. Abraham gave Lot his choice of the land, and the lure of Sodom began to entice his young heart. In 13:12, he pitched his tent near Sodom. In 14:12, he is living in Sodom. In the beginning of this chapter we are looking at today, he was sitting in the gate of the city, which is most likely referring to him as a respected judge for the city. That is the outline of backsliding. First, it captures the imagination through the eyes. Then you draw near and observe it more closely. Then you move in and experience it for yourself. Then, others who embrace the sin begin to respect you.

Lot was troubled by the sin that surrounded him, but not enough to say anything about it. It tormented his soul, but he could not leave it behind. (2Peter 2:7,8) He was gracious enough to try to spare guests of the city, but heartless enough to offer up his own daughters to the sexual deviants that were pounding on his door. His warning to his future sons-in-law seemed like a joke because his life didn't really proclaim righteousness. He appeared to them as just another Sodomite. And when it came time to leave, he hesitated. Told to flee to the mountains, he insisted on a little Sodom, Zoar. (Genesis 19:20)

This passage today begins with him leaving Zoar and settling in the mountains where the angels had first told him to flee. I would hope that after his wife became a pillar of salt, he had second thoughts about his own desires, examined his heart, and decided to do what the angels suggested. It may have been the trauma of the experience caused him to fear the potential for another judgment to fall. If you saw cities incinerated under the wrath of God, it might make you leery of living in one, don't you think? He took refuge in a cave. It pictures the darkness of what was about

**Commented [notes1]:** 22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. Acts 14:22 (NIV)

**Commented [notes2]:** 28 Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!" Luke 18:28 (NIV)

**Commented [notes3]:** 19 A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; Psalms 34:19 (NIV)

**Commented [notes4]:** 6 But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together.  
7 And quarreling arose between Abram's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. Gen 13:6-7 (NIV)

**Commented [notes5]:** 12 Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. Gen 13:12 (NIV)

**Commented [notes6]:** 12 They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom. Gen 14:12 (NIV)

**Commented [notes7]:** 7 and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men  
8 (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)--  
2 Peter 2:7-8 (NIV)

**Commented [notes8]:** 20 Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small. Let me flee to it--it is very small, isn't it? Then my life will be spared." Gen 19:20 (NIV)

to take place. Caves were often used as tombs, and we wonder about the picture it is painting of Lot's soul.

Why did Lot not return to his uncle? Jesus told the story of a son who took his father's inheritance and lost it all. As he longed for some of the swine slop he was feeding the pigs, he decided to return to his father. (Luke 15:16-18) Why didn't Lot? He'd lost everything but his two daughters. He certainly couldn't have been prospering in that area that had been turned into a desert. Why not return to uncle Abraham? Surely Abraham would have welcomed him. My guess is his pride kept him from it. (Proverbs 11:2) Remember, he took the best and now has nothing to show for it. His choice of green pastures is now a pile of ash. He may have even been concerned about being rebuked by Abraham for the compromises he made. Besides, Abraham had already rescued him once before. It makes me wonder if Abraham had warned him about living in Sodom in a conversation unrecorded by Moses. Certainly his daughters would have been better off if Lot returned to Abraham.

Pride can be as strong as chains. (Psalm 73:6) It is hard to take a fall from respected judge to vagabond. It is hard to humble yourself and admit you were wrong. It is hard to put others welfare above your own, even if they are family members. Lot chose to remain entombed in the cave. What a sad choice, but many seem to make the same kind of decision. Rather than humble themselves, they cling to their pride and follow a path of self-destruction. (Proverbs 16:18)

<sup>31</sup> One day the older daughter said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man around here to lie with us, as is the custom all over the earth. <sup>32</sup> Let's get our father to drink wine and then lie with him and preserve our family line through our father." This was a crime for the Mesopotamian, Hittite and Hebrew cultures, but who was around to enforce the punishment? The girls said they had no other options, but is that true? Could they have insisted on going to stay with their great uncle? Perhaps Lot refused, but it wasn't that far of a journey. If they snuck away one night, they would have arrived before Lot caught up with them the next morning. They chose another course of action.

We are not a congregation that insists on abstinence from alcohol. The Scriptures do warn us again and again to not drink in excess. (Proverbs 20:1) It lowers the inhibitions and gives opportunity for sin with far reaching effects. It tore apart my Great-Grandfather's home. It has killed many innocent people. A Christian with a new heart will know when to stop before the alcohol starts changing the responses they would normally make. It is no wonder we are told to be filled with the Spirit, not wine. (Ephesians 5:18)

Women of in that day saw their self worth in having children. That was how they felt fulfilled. A barren woman was looked on as someone cursed by God. It was also security in old age. The child would look after the parent. The daughters of Lot decided this was the way to honor their father by carrying on the family line. That is some twisted justification. Let's dishonor him to honor him. That is often the twisted reasoning we develop when we decide we want something that it doesn't look like we will get by waiting. Notice their mention of their father's age.

**Commented [notes9]:** 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.  
17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!  
18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.  
Luke 15:16-18 (NIV)

**Commented [notes10]:** 2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.  
Prov 11:2 (NIV)

**Commented [notes11]:** 6 Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence.  
Psalms 73:6 (NIV)

**Commented [notes12]:** 18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.  
Prov 16:18 (NIV)

**Commented [notes13]:** 1 Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.  
Prov 20:1 (NIV)

**Commented [notes14]:** 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.  
Eph 5:18 (NIV)

One after the other, they became pregnant by their father. They were probably between 12 and 16 years of age. That was the age girls were betrothed and both had been betrothed to men in Sodom. This has nothing to do on the daughters' part with sensuality, but instead a desire to be fulfilled and secure.

The term "lie with" is always used in illicit relationships. They knew they were committing a sin. After seeing God's wrath on Sodom, you wonder how they could have tested God like this. In the darkness of night, in the depths of a cave, could it have been any darker? The story must have been handed down by the Moabite and Ammonite cultures unless Abraham learned of it from trading with people from Zoar.

How much of a role did Lot play in this sad outcome? We know he lived within a city of lawlessness. Had he said anything to others, had he reproved them for their wickedness, he would have lost his coveted position of town judge. Imagine the compromises it took to hang on to that position in a town like Sodom. His daughters surely witnessed the compromise and yet saw him spared by God. Did they take the grace of God for granted and expect their actions would have no consequences? (Romans 6:1,2) Sometimes the grace of God upon our lives can encourage our children to test that same grace. How far can we go and escape the wrath of God? How much of this world's satisfaction can we indulge in without paying a penalty? The consequences are always there, some are just more painful than others. Lot was responsible for Sodom in the soul of his daughters. To what extent are we responsible for the world in the soul of our children?

Some commentators believe that the expression of not knowing when they lay down or got up doesn't exclude the knowledge of what he had done. They contend that an unconscious drunk cannot do what Lot did. In other words, you can drag Lot out of Sodom, but Sodom remained in Lot. The willing abuse of alcohol became the excuse for relations with his own daughters.

There is another repeat here as we have seen in earlier chapters of Genesis. This is a perfect parallel to the account of Noah after the flood. In both cases, God's judgments had fallen, the "righteous" leader who escaped the judgment became inebriated (Genesis 9:21), a family member committed some lewd act with them in their intoxicated state (Genesis 9:22), which was a similar sin to those who died in the judgments.

When the Bible repeats an idea or theme, it is because it is very important for us to learn the lesson. What are the lessons in this repeated scenario? It is obvious that we are recipients of grace though we are like those who are judged. God's estimation of righteousness and walking with Him are not based on our perfection. At the same time, those failings bring dire consequences. In Ham's case, his son Canaan was cursed. (Genesis 9:25) The problem won't show up for many generations after Lot, but both the Moabites and the Ammonites chose to become enemies of Israel. The Moabites tried to seduce the Israelites into sexual sin that led to idolatry. (Numbers 25:1) We see that Sodom never left the heart of that family line.

**Commented [notes15]:** 1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?  
2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?  
Romans 6:1-2 (NIV)

**Commented [notes16]:** 21 When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent.  
Gen 9:21 (NIV)

**Commented [notes17]:** 22 Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside.  
Gen 9:22 (NIV)

**Commented [notes18]:** 25 he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers."  
Gen 9:25 (NIV)

**Commented [notes19]:** 1 While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women,  
Num 25:1 (NIV)

Still, we see the grace of God in the midst of all the evil choices of man in drawing out Ruth, a Moabite woman, to be the great-grandmother of David, the line of the Messiah. (Matthew 1:5) We also see on Hamite side of the genealogies the Canaanite, Rahab, enter the lineage of the Messiah. We see that no matter what evil man may perpetrate, no matter what consequences he brings down on his own head, God is still working in the midst of it all to bring people to salvation.

**Commented [notes20]:** 5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, Matt 1:5 (NIV)

We may be spared from judgment. We may enter into covenant with God, yet, we should watch that we do not participate in the sins from which we were saved. They sneak back into our lives in subtle ways. (2Peter 2:20) The consequences go through the generations that follow us, compounding our sin with time. This is the ignominious end of Lot's story. We don't have a record of any other words or actions from Lot. He just fades away, an embarrassed yet prideful old man. What a story of warning to those who will hear!

**Commented [notes21]:** 20 If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. 2 Peter 2:20 (NIV)

Some of us are standing on the hill where Abraham and Lot stood. (Genesis 13:9) The land is before us. We can choose whatever we like. The green pastures of money, fame, and pleasure glitter in the valley below. We can't stay with our mentor. It's time to move on. And the still small voice of the Lord says, "This is the way. Walk in it." (Isaiah 30:21) Which way will we choose? You can have wealth without being materialistic. The question is, is your wealth in God's hands?

**Commented [notes22]:** 9 Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left." Gen 13:9 (NIV)

**Commented [notes23]:** 21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." Isaiah 30:21 (NIV)

Some of us have already moved down near Sodom. We see it day in and day out. Now we are looking at it up close. The seduction is drawing us in, and we are wondering if we can move in and maintain our integrity. Can't we have the best of both worlds? The Spirit of God whispers, "Flee youthful lust!" (2Timothy 2:22)

**Commented [notes24]:** 22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 2 Tim 2:22 (KJV)

Some of us have already moved in. In our mind, we are a positive influence on a corrupt culture. Like Lot, it grieves our soul daily to see the wickedness and abuse. Reality is that we are more influenced than we are being an influence and if we spoke up, we know we'd be rejected. There may even be a few of us who sit in the gates. You may be called of God to do that if you truly can influence more than you are influenced. Just don't fool yourself. (1Corinthians 10:12)

**Commented [notes25]:** 12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 1 Cor 10:12 (NIV)

Are we satisfied with 21<sup>st</sup> century American Christianity or is the most important thing in our life our relationship with our Savior? Is loving Jesus a part of our heart or our whole heart? Are we trying to live like Lot or is our all on the altar? Have you decided to follow Jesus? To what extent? He went to the cross for you. Doesn't He deserve more than just a part of your life? (Matthew 16:24)

**Commented [notes26]:** 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Matt 16:24 (NIV)

As we all return to our comfortable homes today, I think the Lord would have us take this message with us and ask ourselves, "Is my relationship with Jesus really my priority? Or have I made my faith a little addendum to my fame and fortune seeking? Have I settled for something less than the wholehearted devotion He deserves? What needs to change so that future generations will be positively affected by my devotion?" Eternity looms before us. Will the memory of our time on earth merely say, "His righteous soul was troubled by the world around him, but he did nothing about it."