

## Lot’s Bad Example

Lot’s downward path began with the choice to take the best land for himself (Genesis 13:1-13). It was a choice based on selfishness and greed, with no regard for Abraham or for the will of God. It resulted in Lot moving his tents near the wicked city of Sodom. “Lot pitched his tent towards Sodom.” (Genesis 13:12). In making this move, Lot was acting on the same goals as those of the world: he was trying to get ahead financially, with no concern for furthering God’s purpose.

Lot was a man who compromised, who made his choices based on what looked good. Genesis 13:10 says, “<sup>10</sup> And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar.”. So, he just went with the flow of the world, “I’m gonna look out for number one!”, rather than making hard choices based on the will of God.

As you continue to read the story of Lot in Genesis 19, the question arises: Was Lot truly saved? If all we had to go on was the Genesis record, I would say no. But, the Apostle Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, calls him a righteous man, “oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men,” whose “righteous soul” was “tormented day after day with their lawless deeds” (2 Peter 2:7, 8). Now, I have no problem admitting that I have a little trouble understanding that statement. In college, Professor Hartwick would say, “Lot righteous? Students I have a problem with that! One day I’m going to have to ask Peter about that.” You can ask Peter about it if you like but remember that the words come from the Holy Spirit. Who knows, maybe Peter was thinking, “What in the world did I just write?” Nevertheless, Lot’s life does have something to teach us.

### The world is thoroughly corrupt.

Sodom shows us the world without God. On one level, it is an ugly, repulsive picture. It was a city where it wasn’t safe to be on the streets after dark, where not only the young men, but even the old (19:4) were living to satisfy their lusts, even if it meant homosexually raping two visitors; or offering your virgin daughters in their place. But on another level, Sodom had its attractive side. It was

sophisticated and prosperous. In Ezekiel 16, the LORD brings charge against Jerusalem saying that she is like her older sister Sodom. Verse 49 says that even though there was abundance of food and ease of life, still she did not do what was right.

Abundance and ease of life are enticing. We struggle to make ends meet by the sweat of our brow and then we have abundance and ease in the world and it so often calls us with such a loud voice.

The apostle John says that the world entices us with “the craze for sex, the ambition to buy every-thing that appeals to you, and the pride that comes from wealth and importance” (1 John 2:16, Living Bible). So even though we know from the Bible that the world is corrupt and under God’s judgment, it still has its appeal.

What we need to keep in mind is that though this corrupt world has its enticing side, it is doomed for destruction even as Sodom was. Lot was living in and was conformed to this corrupt world. He was in the world and he was of the world!

Our churches should influence the world but instead we are letting the world influence the churches.

The solution is to recognize the signs of corruption and, as Phillips translates Romans 12:2, “don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold but let God re-mold your minds from within”. To recognize and resist the signs of corruption and to be renewed in our minds, we’ve got to saturate ourselves with God’s Word. While there are many marks of conformity to the world, our text reveals six. Someone has said that it is perfectly natural for a ship to be in the water but when the water comes into the ship it becomes dangerous for the ship. You can test yourself, to see how much water you’ve let into your ship, perhaps without even knowing it.

## **Signs of conformity to the world: Genesis chapter 19.**

(1) You’re living for the same goals as the world. Lot moved to Sodom to get ahead financially. He didn’t go there to reach Sodom for God. He went there to get rich just like everyone else. Watch the “progress” he made.

A. After their shepherds quarreled Abraham told him to choose which way he was going, and Lot choose the well-watered fields of Jordan and set out towards the East and pitched his tents near Sodom - Genesis 13:11-12. However, he did not see, or didn’t care, that the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord - Genesis.13:13.

B. In chapter 19:1, we find him sitting in the gateway of the city, showing that he was a person of importance in the town and in 19:3 he had a house in the city.

Paul warned in 1 Timothy 6:9, “<sup>9</sup> But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition [utter destruction, ruin, damnation]”. Lot had the wrong goals.

Each of us needs to ask, “How are my goals in life different than those of the guy next door who doesn’t know Jesus?” The Lord said that unbelievers eagerly seek for material prosperity, but His followers are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:31-33).

So, check out your goals. If, like everybody else in the world, you’re just living to become financially secure, to make a comfortable living, you’re being conformed to the world. If you’re living for the world’s goals, sooner or later you’ll be tainted by the world’s moral corruption.

(2) Your morals become conveniences. At first, it looks as if Lot has avoided the moral pollution of Sodom. When the men of the city try to force the two visitors outside, Lot goes out and says, “Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly” (19:7). But what he says next is unbelievable: He offers them his two virgin daughters to rape as they please (19:8).

He was trying to prevent one awful sin by suggesting another. His convenient morals are learned and upheld by his daughters. In 19:31-38; they see their situation in the cave as an emergency, get their father drunk and become pregnant by him and that was not a moral problem for them. How convenient!?!?

(3) You’re more concerned for your status than for your family. Lot was willing to sacrifice his daughters to save his guests because there was a strong social custom which said that you had to protect those who came under your roof as guests. And in Sodom, there wasn’t much social stigma connected with sexual immorality. So, to protect his status in the community, Lot tried to protect his guests at the expense of his daughters.

I’m sure none of us would do what Lot did, but we often do other things to protect our status at the expense of our families. We work long hours to try to succeed financially, even though it means neglecting the family. Why do we do that? We want the status that comes from success. What do you think of when you hear that someone is successful? That he raised his family to fear the Lord or that he made it financially? Success with our family just doesn’t carry the same weight in our culture as financial success. When we buy into that view of status, we’re being conformed to the world.

(4) You’re not respected by the world for your beliefs. All the while that Lot had lived in Sodom, there may have been a few times when he had tried to tell them about God. But now when he weakly tries to tell the Sodomites they’re wrong, they don’t respect him (19:9). He doesn’t even have any credibility with his future sons-in-law, who think he’s joking about God judging Sodom (19:14). The reason they didn’t believe him was that it was so out of character for him to get alarmed about spiritual matters. For years he had lived quietly in Sodom, pursuing the same goals as everyone else. So, when he “gets religion,” nobody believes him.

Of course, there always will be mockers in the world. No committed Christian will win a popularity contest. But there’s a difference between being liked and being respected.

When the world doesn’t respect you for your Christian stand, it may be because you’ve lived like them for so long that it seems out of character for you to suddenly be so concerned about God and morality. The world may not like your viewpoint, but if you live consistently before them, usually they will respect you.

(5) You’re not sure you want to give up the world, even when it’s going to cost you your life. Lot had to flee so that he wouldn’t be destroyed with that wicked city. And yet he hesitated (19:15-16). He couldn’t have saved anything if he had remained behind. He would have lost even his own life; and yet he hesitated.

Why did Lot hesitate? Because, as Jesus said in Matthew 6:21, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”. Your heart always follows your treasure. If your treasure is in your things, then you won’t want to give them up, even if it costs you your life to hang on to them. That’s a sign of conformity to the world.

(6) You attempt to keep a little bit of sin in your life, even when God is dealing severely with you. Lot and his wife and two daughters were reluctant to leave Sodom, they had to be dragged out by the two angels. The angels urgently tell him to flee for his life, and incredibly, Lot wants to barter with them to keep a bit of his old way of life intact. He thanks them for their mercy in saving him, but then he protests that he can’t flee to the mountains as they tell him to do. That would be just a bit too much. Instead, he wants permission to go to a small town nearby, the implication being that since the town was small (Zoar means “small”), its sins won’t be too bad. Note that God didn’t prevent him. The Lord will let you hang onto your sinful way if you insist on it.

### **Conclusion**

And that is where we will leave it today and then pick it up again next week. But as we prepare our hearts to pray, perhaps it would be a wise question to ask ourselves, “Is there water in the boat of my life? If so, are you willing to turn the spiritual bilge pump of sanctification on and empty your hull?”