

Father's Day 2014 (Lessons from Lot for Father's Day)

Happy Father's Day to all of our Dads! I hope you can enjoy a special day with your family and I appreciate you being here this morning to worship with us. Dads, the example you set by your faithful attendance is so vitally important to your children and their relationship to the Lord and to the church. A study done by the Swiss government several years ago had some startling results with regard to religious devotion and the role of the father. Their study found "If a father does not go to church, no matter how faithful his wife's devotion, only one child in 50 will become a regular worshiper. If a father does go regularly, regardless of the practice of the mother, between two-thirds and three-quarters of their children will become churchgoers. One of the reasons suggested is that children tend to take their cues about domestic life from Mom while their conceptions of the world outside come from Dad. If Dad takes faith in God seriously then the message to their children is that God should be taken seriously." Dads, men, there is a generation of children and youth, not just your biological children, watching you. How you live and the example you set is so important. So thank you for being here today.

Turn to Genesis 13. I've shared this story before for Father's Day but I felt prompted in my spirit to share this word. (While this message is for all of us, I want to direct it especially to the men and dads.) Genesis tells of the call of Abraham to leave his home and travel to a land God would give to him and his descendants forever. Abraham's nephew Lot decided to go with Abraham and journey with him to this new land.

Genesis 13 tells us that both Abraham and Lot prospered along the journey and their herdsmen began to quarrel over water rights and grazing rights. Genesis 13:6 says the land could not support them while they stayed together because their possessions were so great so they decide to go their separate ways so there would be no trouble between them. Generously and humbly, Abraham tells Lot to choose the land he wants in any direction and he can have it and Abraham will take whatever is left. Notice what happened.

"Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company."
Genesis 13:10-11.

Lot saw what looked to be the best, the richest most fertile land. He saw what looked like

the most prosperous path and he took it. There was nothing wrong with that. Abraham told him to choose and he did. But there is a lesson for us. In the final analysis of all that happened to Lot (and we will see this as we go along in our study), **What looks best from a human/worldly viewpoint may not be the best from a heavenly/eternal viewpoint.**

We are quick to make our judgement based on what we see, what we can weigh from a purely human perspective. This looks like the easy way, it looks like it will yield the greatest payout in the shortest amount of time – but if it isn't God's way and God's will – if our choices are based on greed or selfish pride rather than a desire to do right and please God, then what looks like the best way will prove to be a destructive way.

The bible says there is a way that seems right to a man but the end leads to destruction and death. It was free land and a free choice but may I tell you, **Sometimes you can't afford free!** It may look like a bargain but in the end, the cost will prove too great.

It doesn't say Lot sought the Lord as to which land he should choose or which direction he should go, he just chose what looked the best and easiest for him. But he paid a terrible price. I left out part of verse 10. It is parenthetical information in the NIV. It says in speaking of the beauty of the land Lot chose, **“(This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)”** Lot chose based on outward beauty, but he never considered the plans the Lord had for the land or the judgement that was coming.

Men, be careful in the choices you are making. Just because it looks pretty or easy, if God isn't in it, avoid it. Make your choices after you seek the Lord. Look at verse 12.

“Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.”

Lot may or may not have made a mistake in choosing the “plains of the Jordan”, but his next choice was a mistake. Lot settled his herds and herdsmen among the cities of the plain, but he kept moving himself and his family, his tents, his dwelling, closer and closer to the city of Sodom and its wickedness. **You can't be on friendly terms with sin.** I'm not talking about people. You can love sinners, but you can't flirt with and develop a friendship with sin. We live in this world, on this planet, within our culture, but we are not of this world. We can't adopt its viewpoint, we can't warm to its lifestyle, we can't embrace its' values. Compromise is deadly.

Dads, your children are watching and listening. You can't afford to be a friend to sin. Don't keep moving closer to Sodom and sin. Someone said what parents do in moderation, children do in excess. Dads and moms, keep the door to sin shut tightly. Don't allow compromise to creep into your relationship with God. Don't allow sin to subtly creep into the lifestyle of your family. I'll say it again, you can't be friends with sin. Sin makes for a lousy neighbor, a terrible companion. Run from sin, for your own sake and for the sake of your children.

In spite of God's assessment of the city and the great sin of the people of Sodom, Lot ignored it all and moved his family closer to the influence, closer to the draw of the city and the temptations presented there. How foolish, to move closer to a place that was destined for God's judgment. Instead of drawing back, repulsed by the sin, he put himself and his family in harms way, exposing them all to the rebellion and waywardness of sin and its consequences.

Dads, parents, you should be the first line of defense for your children with regard to sin and temptation. Don't allow compromise to affect your own standards and then help your children see the consequences of sin and wrong behavior. Help them see the devil's tactics in temptation. You wouldn't put poison out on the kitchen table where your child could accidentally get to it. Then don't put sin in front of them through the lifestyle you live, the stuff you watch, the places you go, the things you do and say.

You see, Lot just started out living in his tent on the outskirts of town. He wasn't going to put his family at risk. He wasn't going to live in the city, he just wanted to be close. But the closer Lot moved to Sodom, the closer he came to embracing the sin of the people. (And by the way, Sodom's sin wasn't only sexual immorality, the bible says they were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned, they didn't help the poor and needy, they were haughty and did detestable things. Ezekiel 16:49). By the time Sodom comes under attack from some neighboring kings, the bible says Lot was living in Sodom! **“They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom.” Genesis 14:12** No longer living on the outskirts, Lot was now living with his daughters and family inside the city. Look what happens.

Lot gets himself kidnapped and it is uncle Abraham that rescues him and all his possessions and the other people and possessions of the city. Lot should have wised up. He should have told Abraham he was going another direction and getting away from Sodom when he rescued him, but Lot went right back to Sodom. God gave him another chance to make the

right decision but instead, Lot went right back to living in the middle of Sin City. **When God gives you another chance, take it!**

Notice the choice Abraham made. He brought back the people and the possessions and gave them to the king of Sodom. The king told him to keep the possessions as a reward for rescuing the people and Abraham told him, **“I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich.’”**

Genesis 14:23

Abraham wanted nothing to do with Sodom, with its sin or its king or its reputation. He didn't want anyone to say that Abraham was made rich by his association with ungodly people or practices. Abraham took a hard line. I think it's time we take a hard-line stand against wickedness.

Understand, this isn't about saying that you are better than others. This isn't about judging sinners but it is about judgment – good judgment. Making choices based upon right judgment, knowing what will lead to sin and failure for you or your children or family. Refusing to even open the door to sin or to allow ungodly influence to begin to permeate your family. Men, it's time to act like Abraham and say “I don't want anything that has to do with sin or immorality or ungodliness – not even a thread or the thong of a sandal.” Take a stand even if it costs you. It may mean the job you take or the job you refuse. Two dollars an hour more if you work at the casino, but is that the job God wants you to have? It may be the video game you want but shouldn't have because it glorifies sin and violence. It may be the movies or music or clothes. It may be your stewardship, the use of your time, your relationships. We need wise and righteous judgment for ourselves and for our children's sake..

Bear in mind too, I'm not saying Lot was a terrible sinner. The bible refers to him as a righteous man. 2 Peter says, **“and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men...” 2 Peter 2:7.** He was distressed by the sin, but is that enough? To have an inward feeling of distress? But did he warn his family? Did he speak out against the sinfulness and did he take a stand for righteousness?

Quickly, let me wrap this up and show you three final things. Look at Genesis 19. Two angels arrive and tell Lot they are going to destroy the city and for him to get his family and get out. Lot goes to his future sons-in-law, products of the culture of Sodom, and told them they

must flee the city because God was preparing to destroy the place and look what the bible says in verse 14, **“His sons-in-law thought he was joking”**. Does that sound like a joke to you? It strikes me that perhaps God’s view of Sodom and his view of wickedness and sin had not exactly been a dinner time topic of conversation. You would think, as grieved as he was by the sinfulness, that he would have been talking about it with his family. You would think he would have said, “God is going to judge this place for its’ sinfulness, just like I’ve been telling you. Now, let’s get out of here.” Instead, they thought he was joking.

Although Lot was saved, his testimony had been weakened by his compromise. His own family didn’t take him seriously when he began to speak of spiritual things and of judgment. What is your testimony before your family? If God spoke to you and told you judgment was coming upon this nation, would your family and friends listen to you and believe you, or has your testimony been affected by your spiritual and moral compromise? I’m not questioning your salvation, but is your testimony believable to those who know you best?

Look now at Genesis 19:15-16. The sons- in-law didn’t take him seriously and refused to leave. In the early morning the angels told Lot to take his wife and two daughters and run for their lives or they would be destroyed in the coming holocaust. But notice verse 16: **“When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them.”** Lot hesitated. Two angels just told you to run for your life and Lot hesitates? What’s that about? **Although Lot was saved, his priorities had been affected by his compromise.** New American Standard says they seized his hand and that of his wife and daughters and they brought them out of the house and put them outside of the city. God’s mercy was upon them but it sounds to me like the angels had to drag them out of their house and out of the city. They were so tied to that city, so bound to their possessions and the lifestyle of the city they didn’t want to leave, even at the risk of losing their lives. Your priorities are messed up when you love and value things and possessions more than you value your life, your family and your eternal destiny.

Don’t let compromise affect your priorities. If an angel told you today that destruction was coming and you could save either all of your money and possessions or you could save your family, which would you choose? It’s a silly question isn’t it? At least I hope it is. Of course you would choose to save your family. Your family is much more important than stuff. And

since we know that, and since you've admitted that, how about living like you believe that right now? How about putting your spouse and your children first, above the job, the hobby, the guys, making money. Don't let greed, pride, ambition, compromise, don't let anything cause your priorities to be distorted. Love God and serve him. Love your family and serve them. If the angels told you to get out, would they have to pry your hands off of anything or would you grab your family and run?

Finally, look at Genesis 19:36-38. Lot and his family managed to get out of Sodom, but his wife disobeyed the angels, looked back and was destroyed. Lot and his daughters are hiding in the mountains when the girls decide they need heirs so they get their father drunk and each of them have sex with their own father. This was an abomination to God, a sin, but I can't help but wonder, given the sexual immorality of Sodom, if the girls saw nothing wrong with their actions. Everything was tolerated in Sodom it sounds like. Lot should have been teaching his children what was right and what was wrong. He should have been protecting them from the sinfulness of their society and he should have been explaining the consequences of sin to them. Instead, they learned how to live like the people of Sodom. Maybe Lot never showed them any other way. How sad, not just for Lot, but for his daughters and future generations.

Although Lot was saved, his compromise produced terrible consequences. The consequences of their sin affected not just Lot and his family, but generations of Israelites to come. Lot's daughters each had a son by their father. One was named Moab and the other Ben-Ammi. From their sons came the Moabites and the Ammonites, two groups who were perpetual enemies of Israel.

Lot was a righteous man. He didn't like all the sinfulness around him, but he was willing to put up with it in order to live in the city. He was no doubt carving out a good life. And he hadn't rejected God, he just compromised here and there, just made some adjustments to have a good life. And after all, what did it cost him? He and his family got out alive.

Yes, but it cost him his future sons-in-law. It cost him his wife. He ended up living in a cave with his daughters in the mountains. He lost the very thing he treasured and longed for - a life and home in the city. And finally he ends up in an incestuous relationship and becomes the father of two nations who were cursed and rejected by God. (Deuteronomy 23:3 says, "No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, even down

to the tenth generation.”)

Compromise cost Lot more than he could have ever imagined. Men especially, let me ask you, are your priorities right before God? Are there areas in your life where you know you have compromised and you need to repent and make that right? Do you need to take a stand for righteousness in your own life? Are you a godly example for your family to follow?

Lot could have taught his girls how to live without compromise. Lot could have lived in tents outside the city and taught them that honoring God was more important than living in ease. Lot could have taught his daughters that sin has consequences and always exacts too great a price. Lot could have put his family above everything else.

Lot could have....and so can you. Decide today. Will you compromise like Lot or will you stand like Abraham. Here is what God said about Abraham: **“For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” Genesis 18:19**

Will you live for God and do what is right and will you direct your children to keep the way of the Lord and do what is right? If you will, God will fulfill his promises in your life and in the lives of your children. Take a stand and serve the one who has chosen you. If you don't, you'll have to pay a price far greater than anything you could have imagined. The price of sin and compromise is far too great. Serve the Lord!