

There's A Lot To Consider
II Peter 2:7-8

A West Virginia State trooper pulled over a woman doing 15 miles over the speed limit. After he wrote her a ticket, she asked, "Don't you give out warnings?" He replied, "Yes ma'am, they're all up and down the road. They say, 'Speed limit 55.'"

The Bible is full of warning signs. Some people haven't read them and others simply ignore them even though they have read them. They read the Bible as if it's just a book of suggestions without consequences. After all God is loving and forgiving and full of grace and mercy. So they ignore the warning signs.

Peter has given us warning signs as well. We saw a few weeks ago that Noah warned his generation of a coming flood that would destroy the entire world. Okay, so it took over 100 years for it to happen, but it did just as it was preached. Sadly, no one but Noah's 7 family members heeded the warning. They were the only ones saved from the complete global destruction of everything living on the earth at that time. It wasn't just that God warned them about the pending destruction, He was also very clear about how they could be saved from the catastrophe.

Two weeks ago we considered the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and today we will look at the rescue of Lot from that destruction. In a sense, it too, is a warning sign. Peter gave them as warnings to those in his day who were false teachers to graphically illustrate what will happen to them for leading people away from the truth.

Those warnings continue today. *Christianity Today* recently had an article about the rise of false Messiahs. And in addition to the very clear warnings that are posted for all to see, one thing is also very clear: with the warnings comes the means of rescue. Our passage today is a case in point.

This morning we are going to take a look at Lot. As we consider this guy I find the passage in II Peter to be puzzling from what I read in Genesis about him. It's a picture in contrast. It looks as if we are talking about two different people. What we read of him in the Old Testament doesn't seem to match what we read about him in the New Testament. The Old Testament doesn't leave us with a very good impression of him. Yet the New Testament paints an entirely different picture. Based on these two separate accounts he is a bit of an enigma. Yet if we hold the mirror up to his life I find it all too easy to see my own image in the reflection.

Herbert Lockyer explains it this way. Pay careful attention to his words. His words set the stage for what we will consider and discover about this person Lot and perhaps ourselves. He writes: "We deem it necessary to spend a little time with this character because we believe Lot to be a representative man. Perhaps there is no Bible figure who represents so many men of today as Lot of Sodom. Where you can find one Abraham, one Daniel or one Joshua you will find a thousand Lots. Lot started out well."

Essentially he's saying that most of us are like Lot. Somewhere along the way Lot became complacent. He was complacent about his faith and with that complacency came compromise and with that compromise came poor choices. Let's take a look at his life because whether we like it or not, whether we're honest with ourselves or not, whether we admit it or not, there is a Lot to consider in all of us. We may be just like him.

We have to start at the beginning to get the full picture. We need to take a look at where he started and that means first taking a look at his family.

I. HIS FAMILY

We first read about him in Genesis 11. We pick it up in verse 26.

Genesis 11:26-12:9

Here's the summary of his family ties. Terah was his grandfather. Terah had three sons of note. There was Abram, Nahor and Haran. Haran was Lot's father which made him by association the nephew of Abram. They lived in Ur.

Now you need to understand that the area and people, including Abram's father Terah, was pagan. They were idolaters. Archeological finds of Ur reveal that it was a highly civilized and a great cultural center. Think of it as New York City or London or Paris today or Rome and Ephesus or Athens in the days of the Apostles.

The city boasted an estimated population of 300,000 people in a 4 mile radius. Remains of an ancient ziggurat where they worshipped the moon god was discovered in the early 1900's. In its heyday Ur was considered to be one of the most important cities in the world.

While living in their birth city, we read that Haran, the father of Lot, had died. In verse 31 it says that Terah took Abram along with Lot and left the city to go to the land of Canaan but stopped and settled in the city of Haran. This place also worshipped the moon god so most likely Terah felt right at home with these people and decided to settle down there. It was during this time that Terah also died.

We're not sure how or when, but somehow in the din of all the pagan worship around them God got Abram's attention. Genesis 12:1 simply says that God spoke to Abram and told him to leave his country, people and family and go to a place God would show him. This was the beginning of Abram's walk of faith. God also said that Abram would become a great nation and would be blessed.

Skipping a couple verses we jump down to verse 4 where we read that Abram obeyed God and took with him his nephew Lot. We aren't sure how old

Lot was, but Abram assumed responsibility for the care of Lot who became a ward of Abram.

In time Lot would prove to be more of a burden than a blessing. We'll find in a couple chapters that he is married with two daughters. Some believe he had four daughters. That's his family in a nutshell.

Along the way, Lot also became quite wealthy. His wealth would prove to be the beginning of the end for Lot. Consider his fortune.

II. HIS FORTUNE

Now let me remind you that having wealth isn't the problem. Being rich isn't a sin. Abraham was quite wealthy as was Job. But riches became the proverbial noose for Lot. Let me pick up again with Lochyer's assessment. "Lot started out well. But he acquired riches and with his wealth came trouble. He and his uncle, Abraham, came out of Egypt with great possessions. Then came the strife among the herdsmen of both men."

We read about this strife in chapter 13.
13:5-9

Let me remind you of what I just said. Being rich isn't wrong. Having money in the bank isn't wrong. Having a nice retirement nest egg won't incur God's wrath. It's not a question of having money. The question is this: do you control your money or does your money control you? At some point greed takes over and the person loses spiritual focus. It was Paul who wrote to Timothy that money is the ROOT of all evil (I Timothy 6:10). He didn't say that money was evil, but that money can be the beginning of all kinds of problems if we let it consume us.

I can go out to Robyn's garden and pull up weeds one week and go back a week later only to find that same weed has grown again. It's because I didn't get the root the first time.

Here's how he got his fortune. Famine had forced them to flee to Egypt where they spent more time and accumulated more wealth and servants. In chapter 13 things improved and they left Egypt and headed north and settled down. While Abram was able to manage his wealth, Lot let his wealth manage him.

A rich young ruler came to Jesus asking about eternal life but left unwilling to let go of his wealth to find what he sought after. Pride kept him from giving up what couldn't bring him eternal life.

In pride a rich guy built bigger barns thinking that would sustain him for a life of ease, but in reality couldn't keep him alive one more night.

Abram proposed a solution to the dilemma of their combined vast wealth. If Lot went west, he would go east. If Lot went east, he would go west.

Herbert Lockyer continues with his assessment of Lot. "Lot could not pick a quarrel with his uncle, so he separated from him and made the greatest mistake of his life in doing so. If determined to have the well-watered plain, Lot should have asked Abraham to choose for him. But no, when he lifted up his eyes and saw the fruitful land, his decision was made. (Now please catch this.) *The moments of solemn, decisive choice reveal the character of the two men involved.* Lot's choice was a bad and selfish one, ending in disaster. Abraham's choice was lofty, unworldly, superior to all petty consideration. Although, as elder of the two, he had the undisputable right to precedence in the choice, Abraham behaved like the high-minded, noble-hearted gentleman he was and so left the choice to Lot. The meanness of Lot is seen in that he took the best. The crisis of that moment was decided by the tenor of Lot's life. In spite of his general righteousness, Lot must have had a vein of great selfishness within."

In a speech titled *The Subject of Salaries*, Benjamin

Franklin said, "There are two passions which have a powerful influence in the affairs of men. These are *Ambition* and *Avarice*: the love of power and the love of money. Separately, each of these has great force in prompting man to action; but when united in view of the same object they have in many minds the most violent effects."

This has become most evident in two separate but related court cases as the greed of Paul Manafort and Michael Cohen have unearthed a host of allegations and convictions surrounding their fortunes.

Just as Lockyer noted, Lot began well but his vast wealth got him in trouble because he let it control him and his decisions. Notice his foolishness.

III. HIS FOOLISHNESS

Notice in chapter 13 verses 10-13 three important thoughts embedded in these verses.

The first is in verse 10 where it says that Lot saw how well watered and fertile the land toward Sodom and Gomorrah was. It was like the land of Egypt.

My Sociology professor in college would say that you can take the person out of the ghetto but you can't take the ghetto out of the person.

You could take Lot out of Egypt but you couldn't take Egypt out of Lot. He had a taste of the best in the land of Egypt and what he saw before him was just like it and he wanted it, he coveted it.

I read this passage and my mind wandered to Achan. "When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them" (Joshua 7:21)

Perhaps Achan reasoned that they had been wandering around the desert for 40 years wearing the same clothes and sandals, eating the same food

with little to quench their thirst and when he saw that beautiful Armani suit with some cash he thought he deserved it. He could buy his wife a nice Gucci purse and take her out to a really fancy restaurant. When he saw them he coveted them.

To covet means to intensely want something, to be envious.

James 3:16 “For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”

Envy is a powerful force for evil. It will drive a person to do most anything and in Lot’s case maybe he wanted to make a name for himself having lived in the shadow of his uncle and this was his chance.

Folks, are you looking in the wrong direction? Have you taken your eyes, even for a moment, off the Lord and His Word?

The second important point to consider is in verse 12 where it says that Lot “lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tent toward Sodom.”

That he pitched his tent in that direction means he settled in and made it home. The allurements of the bright lights and fast pace of city life enticed him. He had his eyes on Sodom and what it offered.

David begins the Psalms with an important lesson to keep in mind if you want to be truly happy. “Blessed or happy is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates, thinks on constantly, chews on it regularly day and night.” (Psalm 1:1-2)

The well-watered land had more appeal to Lot than the wonderful Word of the Lord. Somewhere along the way obeying God took a back burner.

The final point is found in verse 13 and is a commentary on the people of Sodom. “Now the

men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.” The Message says they “were evil – flagrant sinners against God.” There sin was willful and deliberate.

When Lot saw the fertile land he coveted it and he moved toward the city, a city described as utterly wicked. His fortune led him to make some bad choices and in this we see his foolishness.

What comes to mind is the advice from John who writes “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world.” (I John 2:15-16)

Consider the same passage from the Phillips paraphrase “Never give your hearts to this world or to any of the things in it. A man cannot love the Father and love the world at the same time. For the whole world-system, based as it is on men’s primitive desires, their greedy ambitions and the glamour of all that they think splendid, is not derived from the Father at all, but from the world itself.”

In Romans 12:2 Paul says not to let the world mold you, but rather let God’s Word transform you.

Achan and Lot let the world and what they saw mold them. Unfortunately and admittedly I see it at times in myself and maybe you see it in yourself as well. Lockyer is right. For every Abraham, for every Daniel, for every Joshua there are a thousand Lot’s, a thousand Christians who are willing to be complacent in their faith, molded by the world instead of being characterized by their faith and transformed by the Word of God. They are willing to compromise a little just to try and get ahead. Once made those decisions can never be undone.

26 year old Reality Winner was recently sentenced to serve time for sending out classified information. In a statement she said what she did was an “undeniable mistake”.

We live with the consequences for one bad choice. They become an entry on the transcripts of our life. Lot pitched his tent and looked at Sodom.

Don't be so foolish to think that we can pitch your tent toward whatever our Sodom might be and not be affected.

Now you might be thinking okay that all sounds really good but you don't know where I work or the neighborhood where I live, Sodom is around me all the time. I'd love to move or get a different job but it just doesn't seem to happen. Trust me I know. Continue to stand strong in faith and trust God. Don't compromise. If you don't transform your mind with the Word of God, the world will transform you and mold you.

Abram's actions stand in stark contrast to Lot and provide some guidance in helping us live in a world steeped in sin. They have to do with his actions and attitudes. In the time that Lot lived with his uncle, Abram showed him what a walk of faith was like, how you should trust God. We read in chapter 12 verses 7 and 8 of two different occasions and two different locations that Abram built an altar to the Lord and called on His name. After Lot moved on we read about two more instances where Abram did the same thing. His focus and faith were on God. In chapter 13 verses 4 and 18 we read that Abram built two more altars and worshipped God. You would hope that left an impression on Lot. If it did, it doesn't appear to be a lasting one. These are tangible examples of faith that Abram demonstrated to Lot.

Somewhere along the way Lot thought his faith could be the same. Faith is like an ember. Once removed from the fire it quickly loses its fire and heat and it goes cold.

When we remove ourselves from the flame of faith, God will sometimes use circumstances to get our attention, to make us see what is obvious to others but not ourselves. He gave Lot a wake-up call to get him out of Sodom, to remove him from that sin drenched environment. We read about it in chapter 14. A civil war broke out and Sodom and Gomorrah were plundered. Lot and all his possessions were seized and taken captive. When we compromise our faith and find ourselves in a position where our testimony is suspect God can and sometimes does use circumstances to get our attention and get us out of more serious trouble than if we were to stay.

Unfortunately when we come to chapters 18-19 we find Lot right back in town among the very place that God wanted to take him out of. It says he was sitting in the gate. It was a place where city officials met to conduct town business. Lot had become a leader in the town. He couldn't leave or didn't want to leave.

In Proverbs 26:11 we read “As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.”

That's a bit graphic just before lunch but I believe that sums up Lot. He couldn't let go. Even when Sodom and Gomorrah were about to be burned up and the angels told him to flee to the plains to escape, Lot pleaded with them to allow him to run to another city nearby. He couldn't leave it.

Maybe that sums us up. We never learned our lesson the first time so we go right back to it. According to the US Department of Justice 68% of criminals who are released from prison are back in jail within 3 years and 77% within 5 years. Solomon is right when he says that as a dog returns to its vomit, a fool returns to his folly.

Lot didn't learn.

There are three things that really trouble me about Lot in chapters 18 and 19. The first thing that

bothers me is when all the men of Sodom came beating on his door demanding that he send out the two visitors so they could gang rape them. Lot in turn offered his two daughters in exchange (v. 8). If you have daughters, that sounds insane. A man walking in true faith wouldn't do that.

The second thing that bothers me is when the angels told Lot to go and get the two guys engaged to his daughters so that they could also escape the coming destruction and they laughed at him because they thought he was joking (v. 14). That tells me no one really took Lot's faith seriously. He had no spiritual influence on them. It appears he wasn't consistent in his walk with the Lord.

The third thing that bothers me and tells us about where his heart really was is when the angels told them to flee the city and it says in verse 16 that he *hesitated*. Sometimes hesitation can be good. There's hesitation in music. It's a time to catch your breath. Sometimes we read in the Psalms the word 'Selah'. They would insert a word that meant to pause and reflect. Those are good hesitations.

Most of the time hesitation can be bad. You hesitate in an intersection and get broadsided. You're guarding a man on the basketball court, he does a juke and jive move that makes you hesitate and he blows right by for an easy layup. Lot hesitated. I take that to mean he was really giving some thought about whether or not to leave. It boggles the mind when I hear about people waiting to leave when a major forest fire is roaring near their house. They're packing up belongings and mementos when they should be fleeing. Paul said when sin comes lurking to flee, run away, don't hesitate and like Lot's wife – don't look back.

Jesus said where your treasure is that's where your heart is also. It appears both were in the city.

His foolishness almost cost him his life. But God

knows those who belong to Him, even if at times they don't appear to have any resemblance to Him. In spite of all that we just read and talked about Lot we finally come to our passage in II Peter where we will consider his favor.

IV. HIS FAVOR – II Peter 2:7-8

What we read in Genesis makes us question whether Lot had any relationship with God because of the decisions he made and yet what we read in II Peter 2:7 paints an entirely different picture.

We notice first that Peter says Lot was rescued. It means to draw to oneself. You have probably heard on the news this past week about the two children, a 3 year old and his 1 year old brother who were rescued after surviving for what authorities estimate to be at least days when their mother lost control of her car and smashed in a ravine killing her. Other than a few cuts and dehydration the two children were unhurt. The 3 year old eventually got out of the car, climbed up the ravine and wandered nearby on the road till someone drove by. The article said the 3 year old wouldn't let go of his rescuer. That's what it means to draw to oneself. Lot was rescued.

The word is also synonymous with the Greek word that is translated to save (sozo). In sozo the prominent idea is to preserve while the word for rescue carries the idea of drawing out. The noun form is translated Deliverer in Romans 11:26 referring to someone who does the rescuing.

Peter gives us the reason for Lot's rescue. He is a righteous man. Peter also gives us an entirely different perspective than what we read in Genesis. In Genesis he appears to be someone who became complacent and compromised his faith. But Peter says he was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men around him. It refers to someone who breaks through the restraints of law just to gratify his lust. They were unprincipled and wicked. They had no sense of right or wrong. Whatever they did was

right to them. Peter's description of Lot speaks of a man who was wearied by the daily barrage of blatant sin that was all around him all the time.

So maybe I have read it wrong all these years and the sin of Sodom really did bother Lot a great deal, even though he seems to have had no influence on the people of the city. Maybe, like Noah, he too was a preacher of righteousness after all only eight escaped the flood. But rather than camp on Sodom's wickedness I want to focus on Lot's righteousness. What is it that made him righteous especially when we read in Romans 3:10 that no one is righteous?

Romans 3:21-26

Romans 5:17-19

We have been talking about this in prayer meeting. It has direct ties with justification. So let me see if I can sum it up here as we wrap up our message. We have no righteousness of our own. There is nothing we have or can do that can merit any favor with God. But we read in Psalm 11:7 that God is righteous. In order for us to become righteous God had to provide a means for that righteousness to be imputed or credited to us. In this case the righteousness of Christ is credited to the person who believes or has faith according to Romans 3:22 "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ."

The source of our righteousness is from God.

The means of our righteousness is through Jesus Christ.

The crediting of His righteousness to us is by faith. Because Christ was without sin, because He was righteous in His life, His sacrificial death became the acceptable payment by which God's wrath could be satisfied for our sin and could then render us righteous by our faith. Death of a perfect sacrifice was required to meet God's demands for payment. By faith in Christ's sacrificial death God clothes us in the righteousness of Christ. Now when God looks at us instead of seeing our sin He sees us clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

So when it says that Lot was righteous he was made righteous the same way we are – by faith. He had to have faith in the coming Messiah/Redeemer promised back in Genesis 3:15, just as much as we look back in faith at the same Savior who died for all sin. Only by faith can Lot be considered righteous even if his life is marred by some sin.

There is not a different means to obtain righteousness for those in the Old Testament and those in the New Testament. It's all by faith. We read in Habakkuk 2:4 "The righteous shall live by faith."

We read in Romans 3:22 "This righteousness from God comes through faith."

It's the same for all believers. Righteous comes through faith.

Walvoord & Zuck in the Bible Knowledge Commentary conclude that "Christ's death vindicated God's own righteousness (He is just because sin was 'paid for') and enables God to declare every believing sinner righteous."

Now whatever your view of Lot, one thing is for sure, you'll see him in heaven because he was righteous. Whether he was a man of complacency and compromise is unclear but one thing is for sure – he was declared righteous.

Now you can be satisfied with being content with a static faith, a faith that isn't growing. You may even be satisfied with complacency and an occasional compromise. Whether or not you are like Lot only you and God know. But one thing you share in common if you have faith, is that you too are considered righteous.

As David started a new school year we took him out to dinner and I challenged him to consider what he could do this year to make him stand out, that would distinguish himself from the rest of his classmates. How could his faith be evident? Anyone can be a Lot. Many Christians are. The challenge is to be an Abraham and let faith be your

guide and guard your steps. Are we committed with conviction to a faith we say we believe in? It will take courage and being Christ-centered. We encourage him not to take the easy road, not to settle for mediocrity.

Tom Cruise is arguably one of the best actors in Hollywood. He is known for doing many of his own stunts. In his recent Mission Impossible movie production was delayed three months after he broke his ankle while jumping from one building to another. He said he knew it was broken the moment he landed but kept running in order to get the scene filmed. In another scene he is doing a high-altitude, low-opening jump out of the back of a military plane at 30,000 feet. The mask was modified so viewers could see that it was actually Cruise doing the stunt. A specially trained camera operator was required to get close-up shots as he fell through the sky at 220 mph. To make sure they got the scene just right he did the jump 106 times. His personal life may be filled with controversy but his efforts in acting should cause all of us to ask if we are that committed to what we say we believe.

Yes, your righteousness by faith will get you rescued and into heaven, but God wants so much more for our faith than just getting us there. He wants us to demonstrate faith every day that will make a difference here and now.

In II Timothy 4:7-8 Paul sums up his life in a way that leaves a challenge to his protégé to consider the same. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have long His appearing.”

Is that your desire?
We have a Lot to consider.