

It All Began With a Bad Decision

Genesis 13-19

Introduction

A certain man was rather ill tempered. In fact, some would say he was occasionally brutal. According to a few reports, he was a weak leader in the home and was unable to hold a steady job. His wife was not well. In fact, she had been plagued for years by a disease that would soon take her life, that of tuberculosis. Of the seven children ultimately born to her, only three lived to adulthood. At this particular time in history, the death rate among children was tragically high – three out of every five children would die. This is what happened to her, of course. She had lost her first son when he was only six days old, and now, less than two years later, this diseased and depressed woman discovered that she was pregnant again. She was advised by everyone to abort, but she stubbornly refused and decided to carry and deliver the child. The civilized world is grateful for her decision, because the child would grow up as Ludwig van Beethoven.

Private Joseph Lockhard and Private George Elliott were on duty at the Opana Radar Station located on the northern tip of Oahu, Hawaii. They were about to go off duty when Lockhard noticed the characteristic blip of an airplane on his radar screen. He would watch as more than fifty blips appeared on the screen. He called Lieutenant Kermit Tyler with his findings, but Tyler assumed that the blips represented American bombers returning from maneuvers over California. He told Lockhard to forget it. Instead of calling Major Kenneth Berquist to confirm his assumption, which was standard procedure, he never called and the men went off duty. That decision, along with many other bad decisions, enabled the Japanese bombers to attack Pearl Harbor without warning.

Decisions like these have had far reaching effects. Fortunately, the decisions that you and I make do not have such worldwide implications. I am very glad of that. However, the decisions that we make do affect our lives and the lives of those closest to us.

Decisions are all important. I think that is why Solomon urged his son, and us, over and over again, to ponder the path of his feet; that is, take careful note

of decisions you are making because they are leading you somewhere, and they bring with them consequences.

Today, we are going to study the life of a man marked by foolish decisions – a man named Lot.

Robert Lewis Stevenson wrote prophetically that every man will one day be seated at a banquet table of consequences. We will soon discover Lot seated at this banquet table. He has spread it with the finest linen and china. You might observe from a distance and think, “Oh, I’d love to be seated where Lot is.”

However, if you come a little closer, you will notice that his plate contains very bitter food. And though he raises a rare and expensive goblet, you will notice that the inside is filled with regret and sorrow. He will also, eat alone. And it all began with a bad decision.

Turn to the first chapter in Lot’s biography – Genesis, chapter 13.

In our last discussion, we learned that Abram had compromised his position. He had gone to Egypt and had almost thrown the virtue of his wife away out of fear for his own life. But God sent a plague on the Pharaoh and his household, so that it was learned that this woman was, in fact, the wife, not the sister of Abram, and Pharaoh released her. Abram had taken Lot along, and when they left Egypt, both were very wealthy.

It is interesting that when Abram returned to Canaan, he built an altar and once again called upon the name of the Lord. He repented and got back to where he ought to be.

However, we will notice what happens in chapter 13, when Lot goes back with him. We will begin with verses 5 and 6.

Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together.

Notice that the land is not too small to hold them. The land of Palestine, the Canaan land, is more than large enough to hold the herds of two wealthy men.

The problem is that prosperity had brought about strife in this family, and it would soon split the family. Note, in verse 7, that the strife is between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock.

And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land.

Abram comes to Lot in verse 8 and note the use of the word "Please". It is used again in verse 9.

So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left."

Factors Behind Abram's Proposal

Now, I think Abram has changed since his time in Egypt. On occasion, before going to Egypt, if he needed something, he would take it into his own hands and make his decision based on factors that we will now discover Lot making his decision based upon. However, in these verses, we see Abram making a gracious proposal to Lot. Let me give three factors behind his gracious proposal.

Abram was prompted by God's original command

1. The first factor that I discover in this text that would cause Abraham to make this kind of gracious proposal is that he was prompted by God's original command. He, in effect, is going back to the original command of God.

Look back at chapter 12, verse 1a.

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house . . ."

Note the phrase, "and from your relatives". Lot was Abram's nephew, the son of his brother Aaron.

God tells Abram to go away from his home, his relatives, and his father's house. Do you know what Abram does? He brings along his father and his nephew, Lot. Abram does not obey completely, until finally, God brings death into his family. Terah, Abram's father, dies. He moves on then, but he still has Lot tagging along. Lot will be a constant source

of irritation. He will take up much of Abram's energy. The whole problem was that Abram never fully obeyed by separating from his relatives.

Now, Lot is back in Canaan with Abram. I think Abram probably thought, "Well, here's my chance to completely obey God. Here is the opportunity we need to separate."

Abram was confident of God's ability to provide

2. Secondly, Abram was confident of God's ability to provide.

I believe that because God had promised Abram the blessing; fertility; that his herds would multiply, and where better could that take place than in the fertile region of the Jordan Valley. And Abram actually gives the choice to Lot. He says, "Lot, if you choose that, I'll head west and north and dwell in the western region, which is less fertile."

How could Abram do that? He was confident in God's ability to provide.

Abram was unselfish in yielding his rights to God

3. Thirdly, Abram was unselfish in yielding his rights to God – not to Lot, but ultimately, to God.

Let us be realistic. Imagine that day with me. Abram says, "Look, Lot, let's have a talk. I want you to understand that there's strife. It's a poor testimony to the Perizzites. What we want to do is split up. I'll give you the choice."

Realistically though, I think Abram has his fingers crossed, thinking, "Okay, Lord, now I've been gracious. Please give me the best slice of land."

I do not think for a moment that Abram walked into this whistling. He was probably very concerned that Lot would allow him to have the best, being the rightful heir; being the elder; being the one God had given the promise to. Lot would say, "Boy, Abram, you're a wonderful guy. Because of that, I want you to have the best."

Not a chance.

I was raised with three brothers in my home as a boy. My mom would often test our character. She would have a platter of some kind of pastry and she would select one of us boys to serve the other three. There was always one pastry on the platter that was bigger than the others. I can remember serving the

dish, wondering if my brothers would respect my graciousness and leave the biggest for me. No way! The one left on that platter by the time my three brothers got through, was always the smallest, scrawniest piece of all.

It is a pipe dream to think that people are going to respond to your graciousness with a pat on the back and say, “Boy, I really respect you. You take the best.”

Do you know what a pipe dream is? A pipe dream is hoping people will respond to you like you would like to be responded to. I clipped a list of pipe dreams out of a book that I read. The following were included:

Imagine, in your wildest dreams, your daughter saying, “Go sit down Mom. I’ll clean up the kitchen tonight.”

Imagine a mechanic looking under your hood and saying, “Oh, it’s nothing. I’ll just tighten up the fan belt.”

Imagine a policeman stopping you and then saying, “You were only going 55? My radar must be on the blink again.”

Imagine your little two year old running around saying, “Yes. Yes.”

Imagine your husband saying, “Tuna casserole again. Wonderful!”

No, these are pipe dreams!

Well, I think to expect Lot to come along and say, “Abram, you take the best,” was a pipe dream. Lot did not even flinch. He probably thought, “Abram’s gone a little whacko giving me the choice. There’s no decision here. This is fertile – I’ll take this.”

I happen to think that Abram was probably depressed.

Now, note what happened in the later part of chapter 13. Look at verses 14 and 15, which occur after the decision has been made.

The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Now lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.”

In other words, “Take heart. The promise is still yours.”

Abram had now had taken away from him everything that he had to support him. His dad had died, and their relationship had probably been so close that it had made it difficult for Abram to separate, even after God commanded him to leave his father’s house. And his companion, his nephew Lot, though irritating at times, was now gone as well. And in addition, Abram is stuck in the west, which is the less fertile region. But God came along and said, “Abram, look up. The promise is still yours. I will give you all this land.”

Continue to verse 17.

Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.

Notice what Abram does next. Does he complain to God? No! Look at verse 18.

Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.

By the way, when making decisions in your life, are these three characteristics evident?

- Obedience to God’s command.
- Confidence in God’s ability to provide.
- Unselfishness in yielding whatever you may think your rights are to God and saying, “God, You work. If it is through a guy like Lot, I will still allow You to work, and I’ll accept the decision.”

Factors Behind Lot’s Decision

Now, let us focus for the remainder of this discussion, on the decision that Lot made. Let us take a look at the factors behind his selfish, and I believe foolish, decision.

Lot was influenced by what he saw

1. The first factor is that Lot was influenced by what he saw.

Look at verse 10 of chapter 13.

Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere – this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah – like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar.

Note the last phrase, “like the land of Egypt”. Lot had dwelt in Egypt and had become wealthy. Egypt never really left him, even though he left Egypt. This land reminded him of the fertile region of Egypt. Continue to verse 11.

So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other.

Now, we know historically that in this valley were five cities: Sodom, Gomorrah, Zoar, Zeboiim, and Admah. They were all prosperous, large cities. They had formed a confederacy and had developed a large, extensive agricultural system in the valley. Each city was located near a pocket of water and they formed a circle. To live there meant agricultural potential; fertile regions. You could have the best of the civilized world at your doorstep. We know there was a large population because tombs have been discovered in that region in which more than a million people are buried. So, Lot pitched his tent there.

The westward upland, where Abram would live, was not as productive. So, Lot chose the more fertile area. He was influenced by what he saw.

Lot was unconcerned by what he had heard

2. Secondly, Lot was unconcerned by what he had heard.

This is implied. Look at verse 13 of chapter 13. I do not think it is a coincidence that Moses inserts this as he writes the account.

Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.

He is trying to find the words to describe the wickedness of this town. He says they were wicked exceedingly *and* they were sinners against the Lord.

Somehow Lot ignored what he had heard about this city. It had the reputation of being sin city. It was totally given over to the practice of homosexuality, as we will discover later. Perhaps Lot thought, “Well, I’m not exactly living in Sodom, I’m just living near enough to enjoy the benefits of its civilization.”

We know that Lot was a gentleman farmer. That means that he did not actually do the labor. He, in fact, grazed his herds seventy miles from where he lived. His servants did the work. He lived kind of in the lap of luxury. So, he probably thought, “If I just

move close enough, I can benefit from all that Sodom has, and I won’t participate.”

He foolishly ignored the reputation of Sodom and what he had heard.

Lot was irresponsible in leading his family

3. Thirdly, he was irresponsible in leading his family.

This is obviously so. Look back at verse 12 of chapter 13.

Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom.

Sodom was the southernmost city of them all. You need to understand, ladies and gentlemen, that he is not moving his family into a home on a nice street in a nice city. Now, I am not implying that we are supposed to stay away, that we are not to be a light in a dark place, but he is moving close enough so that his family will feel the full effect of the lure of wickedness. This is like moving his family into the parlor of a brothel. It is like taking up residence in the backroom of a bar. He would expose his family to such temptation, and we will learn later that they will succumb; they will fall; he will lose his family. In terms of business, what a fantastic decision, but in terms of his family, what a tragic decision.

It is possible to make a similar decision today. A man may take a promotion that gives a bigger paycheck, but literally strips away the time that he has with his family. And he says, “Look how God is blessing me.” Do not blame it on God. We need to constantly evaluate our priorities and our time.

Lot made a fantastic business decision, but it was a selfish decision. It is as if he said, “I’ll lose my family; I’ll potentially give them over to the temptation that they will be confronted with, but I want what I want.”

This is like the little five year old little boy who loved motorcycles. Every time he would see one go by, he would just howl for joy.

We have that problem in our house now. We have two little boys. They have everything but the motorcycle. They have cowboy boots, jean jackets, and a guy in the church who is leading them astray because he has a motorcycle – and he is here today!

So, every time a motorcycle would go by, this little boy would let out a howl of joy, “Oh, soon I’m going to have me one of them!”

His mother would say the same thing that my boys’ mother says, “Not as long as I’m alive you won’t.”

Finally, one day, the boy is standing by the street and is overheard talking to a friend as a shiny new motorcycle goes by. He points and says, “Look at that! Look at that! Just as soon as my mother dies, I’m going to get me one of them.”

In effect, that is exactly what Lot seems to be thinking – “I want what I want, even though it means the potential loss of everything that is really dear.”

The Downward Progression of Lot’s Compromise

Would you note the downward progression of Lot’s compromise?

Lot looked towards Sodom

1. The first step, in chapter 13, verse 10, Lot looked towards Sodom.

Lot pitched his tent towards Sodom

2. Secondly, in chapter 13, verse 12, Lot pitched his tent towards Sodom.

Lot is living in Sodom

3. Thirdly, in chapter 14, verses 11 and 12, Lot is living in Sodom.

Note chapter 14, verses 1 and 2a.

And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, that they made war with Bera king of Sodom . . .

These wicked kings are at war with the king of Sodom and the entire confederacy. Now note verses 11 and 12.

Then they took [overcame] all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed. They also took Lot, Abram’s nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom.

First, it was a look.

Then, it was, “Well, Honey, let’s put our tent nearby.”

Then, the next step – they are living in Sodom.

Lot is a leader in Sodom

4. The final step, in chapter 19, verse 1, Lot is a leader in Sodom.

Turn to chapter 19 and look at verse 1a.

Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. . . .

Historically, we understand that the men who sat at the gates were the political leaders. They were the elders who decided matters of civil law. So, Lot is now a leader.

James Montgomery Boice wrote of this compromise. Let me quote his words:

He moved into Sodom. He made friends with the people. He rose in popularity. He put down deep roots. He built a business and a home. He raised a family, became a leading citizen, and destroyed his life. He destroyed his life by compromising God’s way and accepting as right, those things which God said were wrong. He would betroth his daughters to men of Sodom. He allied his family with the sin of the city. Though he was righteous, he did not present a heritage of righteousness.

The Consequences of Lot’s Decision

Now, we need to cover the consequences of Lot’s decision. I would really like to stay away from chapter 19, because it is so dark; it is so tragic. Yet, it is profitable in some way to us, as believers, so let us dive in.

Lot lost all sense of moral perspective and value

1. The first consequence is that Lot lost all sense of moral perspective and value.

The two angels that had just visited Abraham now come to Sodom. They know judgment is coming, and they come to warn them. Look at chapter 19, verse 1.

Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of

Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.

Lot does not know they are angels at this point. Continue to verse 2.

And he said, “Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant’s house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.” They said however, “No, but we shall spend the night in the square.”

Now, we will cover in a later discussion that Abram has been praying for Lot. He knows that God is going to destroy Sodom, so he says, “Lord, if You can find even ten righteous people there, would You not destroy it?”

Well, God sends two angels. It was the practice in the Old Testament that before you inflicted punishment, you sent two witnesses, so God sends two angels. And they are going to spend the night out in the square to observe the immorality and try to find ten righteous people. But Lot knows what it would be like to spend the night out in the square, so he says, “No, please spend the night in my home.”

Look at verses 2 and 3.

Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter;

This is an entire male population of Sodom given over to sodomy. Continue to verses 5 and 6.

and they called to Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them.” But Lot went out to them in the doorway, and shut the door behind him,

I cannot believe how far this man has stooped that he comes out to answer their invitation. Look at verse 7.

and said, “Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly.”

Now note verse 8.

Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me

bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof.

He had tragically adopted the customary practice that a guest is to be protected, while women are mere cattle. But although that is the custom of society, I do not believe righteous men live that way. In fact, we will discover one of the patriarchs having a wonderful relationship with his wife. They knew better. It seems that Lot had been living in Sodom long enough for some of Sodom to take up residence in him. It is like he is an airplane pilot who is lost in the fog without instruments. He comes out on the porch and says, “Take my daughters. They are virgins. You can have them. But leave these two men that I hardly know alone.”

Men and women, it is possible to live in rebellion and compromise to such a degree that you begin to adopt the pagan measures of your society. In fact, I think that is what Jesus Christ had in mind in Matthew, chapter 6, in the Sermon on the Mount, when he said, “Look, don’t worry, don’t pursue, don’t grasp after that which you put on, that which you eat, the house you live in. Don’t go after that stuff.”

Why? “The pagans are searching after that.”

Do you know what happens to us, as believers, living in this society? We begin to pursue the same things as our wicked society – what we wear, where we live, what we drive, what we eat. These things become our primary pursuit. Sodom lives in us.

Frankly, I would imagine that Lot’s daughters never recovered from hearing their father suggest this horror.

Lot was subjected to harassment

2. The second consequence is that Lot was subjected to harassment.

Look at verse 9a of chapter 19.

But they said, “Stand aside.” Furthermore, they said, “This one came in as an alien [foreigner]; and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them.” . . .

This is implying that Lot had never said anything about their immoral practice. He had sat at the gate as an elder, and had judged matters, I am sure, that

involved this sin, and yet, had never said a word – until now. And they look at him and scratch their heads – they are shocked. They respond, “What do you think you’re saying? Are you our judge?” – meaning this is probably the first time he had ever spoken out against it.

They said, “Get out of our way, or we will treat you just as we will treat them. Stand aside.”

Now note verses 10 and 11.

But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. They [the angels] struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves trying to find the doorway.

It is hardly imaginable that these men are so intent on their immorality that they are struck blind. And what do they do? Run to a doctor? No! They wearied themselves; they continually tried to find the door.

Lot lost his influence over those closest to him

3. This leads to the third consequence that Lot lost his influence over those closest to him.

Look at verses 12 and 13 of chapter 19.

Then the two men said to Lot, “Whom else have you here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring them out of the place; for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the Lord that the Lord has sent us to destroy it.”

Note how Lot has lost his influence, in verse 14.

Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, “Up, get out of this place, for the Lord will destroy the city.” But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

They probably looked at him and laughed and said, “Since when did God speak to you? Since when have you heard the voice of the Lord? The Lord’s going to destroy this city? Right! Sure He is, Lot!”

Lot’s own future sons-in-law did not believe him.

Now the next few verses are not to be believed. Note carefully and even underline, in verses 15 and

16, “When morning dawned,” and, “But he hesitated.” Look at verse 15.

When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city.”

They have already told Lot that judgment is coming. So what does Lot do? He gets a good night’s rest; he goes to sleep! And then they urge him even further when morning dawns and note his response in verse 16a.

But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, . . .

Imagine, if someone came to your home and told you that there was a nuclear bomb in your living room. Would you go to the closet and think, “Let’s see. What tie should I wear? What suit should I pack?”

No! You would be out of there! Destruction is coming, and you do not know when.

You may remember the fire drills when you were in elementary school. You never believed them, did you? You knew they were only drills. But the first graders believed them. They used to line up in a straight line, and they would walk out with eyes rolled big, “Oh, there’s a fire in the school!”

Do you remember that? By then you were in fifth grade, and you knew the score! You just kind of casually strolled out. All of the first graders looked at you thinking, “What courage. Wow!”

You would even run back and get a pencil, because you knew it was just a drill.

Now I have tried to climb inside of Lot’s skin and think in the same way he must have thought. There is only one reason, and I could be wrong, but there is only one reason that I can think of that he would hesitate; that he would get a good night’s rest; that he would lag behind. That reason is unbelief! I do not think Lot really believed God would destroy the city. So, he hesitated; he delayed.

Lot was in disagreement with his wife

4. Fourthly, Lot was in disagreement with his wife.

You could rephrase this consequence a lot of ways. You could say that Lot lost his position of

leadership. You could say that his wife lost respect for him. The truth was that Lot could not even convince his wife that God had spoken to him. Look at verses 23 and 24.

The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar. Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven,

The liberals think that this is just a small fire that somehow exploded some things in Sodom and became a big fire. But it is obvious that taking this literally, fire literally rained out of heaven. Brimstone could be translated, “burning sulfur”. It all came from the sky. Continue to verses 25 and 26.

And He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife, from behind him, looked back, . . .

That phrase, “looked back,” could be translated a number of ways. It could be translated “lagged behind”. In other words, the party was fleeing and she lagged behind. It could also be translated, “returned”. The truth is, I do not believe Lot’s wife thought judgment would come, and she did not believe the testimony of her husband. She had learned to love Sodom.

Lot committed incest with his daughters

5. The fifth and, I think, the most tragic consequence is that Lot committed incest with his daughters.

Look at verses 30 through 32.

Lot went up from Zoar, and stayed in the mountains, and his two daughters with him, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; and he stayed in a cave, he and his two daughters. Then the first-born said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him that we may preserve our family through our father.”

The story goes on to tell that both daughters did that. What a tragic consequence of living in Sodom. Lot’s daughters, instead of trusting God for their heritage, adopted the pagan practice they had probably seen a million times in Sodom.

Their children would be boys. Each would have a son. One daughter’s son would be named Moab. The other daughter’s son would be named Ben-ammi. Moab would be the father of the Moabite nation. Ben-ammi would be the father of the Ammonite nation. These two nations would constantly be a source of irritation and war with the sons of Abraham.

Lot’s story is a red flag that warns anyone who believes that sin will never be found out. His life is a tragic illustration that sin might be pleasurable for a season, but it brings with it the consequences.

Application – Lessons Learned From Lot

Let me apply this passage with two lessons that we can learn from Lot.

Constant exposure to sin ultimately wears down resistance to sin

1. First, constant exposure to sin ultimately wears down resistance to sin.

Do not fool yourself. If you pitch your tent toward Sodom, sooner or later you are going to be living in Sodom. That is why the apostle Paul, in I Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 18, said in regard to fornication or immorality, or “porneia” in the Greek, to what? Stroll away from it? No! To flee! To run! You and I cannot take the temptation.

The consequences of sin always outweigh the pleasures of sin

2. Secondly, the consequences always outweigh the pleasures of sin.

Sin can be pleasurable and even fun. But the penalty is severe.

When he began his incredible career, he was a seventeen year old refugee with a hundred bucks in his pocket. He and his family had been forced to leave a large fortune and flee, and he arrived half a world away in South America to start over. By the time he was twenty-two years old, he had not only earned his first million dollars, but he had earned the reputation of being a ruthless and selfish man.

This man lived a life surrounded by luxury and was devoted to pagan pleasure; to a hedonistic lifestyle. His extra-marital affairs were the talk of the press. And in 1968, he shocked the world with his

marriage to the widow of an assassinated American president. At the pinnacle of his success in 1973, this man would be worth more than one billion dollars. The philosophy of Aristotle Onassis is best summed up by something he said to the press one day, “All that really matters is money. That’s all that matters in life. The people with the money are the royalty now.”

Then, his world began to crumble. His son, who was twenty-four years old in 1973, was involved in a plane crash. He died, and it was said, so did Aristotle’s desire to live. One magazine quoted an associate of Aristotle Onassis as saying that grief and guilt had dulled his sharp business sense, and in one year, he brought his fortune down eight hundred million dollars. Soon after, Onassis himself died.

In many ways, Lot is different from Aristotle Onassis. Lot is a believer. The similarity is that they both went from riches to rags. Think of Lot. He had reached the top. He was successful. He was a wealthy politician. He was influential. He had everything that he wanted – a wife, two daughters, perhaps a palatial home. And now, look at him in chapter 19 – penniless, living in a cave. His assets had been destroyed by the fire. He had lost his wife. And his daughters were now embarrassingly strange to him. What a tragic banquet of consequences.

I want you to take stock now. What kind of decisions are you making? What motivates you to make them? Where are they taking you?

Young person, what have you decided to live like when you walk out the front door of your house? Husbands and wives, where is God in your plans? Businessman or woman, what kind of ethics have you decided to live by in the working place? How close to Sodom do we live?

You may discover today, that Lot is sitting in your seat. If you discover that, then, like Abraham, go to the western highlands and build an altar and once again call upon the name of the Lord.