

Faith (Part 4)

Lot's Wife

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Ezekiel 16:44-48 Indeed everyone who quotes proverbs will use this proverb against you: 'Like mother, like daughter!' "You are your mother's daughter, loathing husband and children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and children; your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. Your elder sister is Samaria, who dwells with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who dwells to the south of you, is Sodom and her daughters. You did not walk in their ways nor act according to their abominations; but, as if that were too little, you became more corrupt than they in all your ways. As I live, says the Lord God, neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done as you and your daughters have done.

What we are looking at here is a very brief insight into the three sisters of Canaan. All three of these sisters, all three of these cities, were in the land of Canaan. Samaria is the oldest, Sodom the middle (and I think that you understand that Sodom has been a big part of the sermon the last couple of weeks, especially last week), and then the youngest is Jerusalem. Jerusalem, though not the oldest, not the youngest, is the vilest. I think that this gives us insight that we would do well to pay heed to because of the times in which we live because they tend to foster the same effects as occurred in these cities and especially as occurred in Sodom. Look at verse 49:

Ezekiel 16:49-50 Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.

And you know how He took them away - BOOM! and they were no longer there. What probably was a nuclear explosion of some kind just obliterated Sodom and the other cities of the area there—except for Zoar—right out of existence, and they are a record to you and me today of what God chose to do because of what was going on in those cities. I want you to see what led to their being blasted, as we would say, to kingdom come. God pinpoints much of the cause of their problem as a false sense of security

(pride), apathy (from an abundance of food), and a luxurious life of ease (they spent their time in self-indulgence). It was this kind of circumstance that fostered the sexual perversions that they are so well known for.

The New International Version translates verse 50 as being "arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned." Remember what Genesis 13:10 said about Sodom, that it was "well watered everywhere . . . like the garden of the Lord." It was a veritable Eden just like the United States and Canada are veritable Edens, producing abundantly for its people, rich soil, rain in due season, everything that one might have need of in order to make a great deal of wealth. An abundance of minerals coming out of the ground: oil, iron, coal, silver, gold. You name it we have it in abundance: rivers, lakes, tremendous amounts of pure clear water, well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, a veritable Eden.

But we can see because of what occurred that the people did not have the character, the right vision, and the faith to properly use and appreciate it, and it snared the people into perversions to provide the excitement, the amusements, and what they considered to be the fulfillment for their lives.

I again bring this to our attention because of the abundant land that we have been blessed with because it too has the tendency to produce the same kind of things in people without the character, in people without the vision, in people without the faith to rightly use it. Did not Moses, in Deuteronomy 32 in the Song of Moses, prophesy that Israel would rebel when it became fat? He uses the code name "Jeshurun" waxed fat and kicked.

Jeshurun is a nickname, a code name for Israel, and he was warning that when Israel became prosperous it would forget God and it would turn to other things, it would lose its vision, it would become smothered by the very abundance that it has, and it would turn its attention to all of these distractions and they would lose the way of life that was given by God through Moses.

Look at what is occurring in the United States and Canada and in Britain as well. There is a rising and threatening tide of sodomites which, though small by comparison to the general population—the straight population—has entrenched itself into positions of authority in the bureaucracy and is able to affect policy that is creating havoc in all of the social affairs: education, medicine, politics, that are affecting the entire population.

The arrogance and unconcern of verses 49 and 50 reveals itself in an obsession with violence on the streets, and a mean, competitive spirit in marital relations, feminism, business, entertainment, in athletics, in which the only thing that counts is profit, control

of others for one's own benefit, and winning. This is what attracted Lot to Sodom. It is the kind of society that we have been living with.

Maybe not all of our lives, though. Those of us who are a little older, we can remember a kinder and gentler America, a period of time when there was not this obsession with the kinds of things that we see today. We have always had a certain amount of violence. We have always had a certain amount of raunchy entertainment. But now we are being overwhelmed with it because sin begets sin, and because one perversion begets a greater perversion, and so the perversions continue to grow and they will only get worse until the iniquity of the Amorites is full and God decides enough is enough and He is going to intervene.

But we have to be aware that we are going to have to deal with it even as it gets worse and worse and it has had its mark on you and me in forming us to what we are. And many of our attitudes and many of our perspectives, the way we look at things, has come from this world.

Last week we had a revealing look at the faith of Lot who, though converted, was carnal. He was living by sight. He first shows his true colors in Genesis 13 where God records, he lifted up his eyes, indicating by that that Lot was being guided by what he saw. There is no indication that he asked counsel of God in prayer. There is no indication that he had the character, that he had the deference toward Abraham to say, "Abraham you choose first." His motivation appears to have been to make a killing for himself. He looked at the things of time in the way man looks, a carnal look. He did not look at things through the eyes of eternity. His thought seems to be of worldly profit, things that would help him in his life immediately, rather than the things that would help him toward eternity.

So he moved to the plain, and the next thing we know in the next chapter, he is living right in the center of wickedness. This man had just come out of Egypt. Surely he should have learned something there, something about the world, about the way the world deals. But he did not. See, that is the way of those who live by sight. Living with the world in the way that Lot did does something to the way a person looks at life, looks at principles, looks at values. People who are living by sight give very little thought to what God thinks about what they are doing.

We speculated that perhaps Mrs. Lot had much to do with the decision that was made by Lot. The record shows that she was not just drawn to Sodom, she **loved** it. We are going to see more of that later. Perhaps the argument for moving into the city had to do with Lot's daughters, that there they were, pilgrims out on the plain. They were not in a

settled situation. There was no community around them. Who were the daughters going to marry, pray tell? Maybe they had to move into the city because the daughters and Mrs. Lot were putting pressure on Lot to move there. Maybe it was Lot himself who instigated the move there because he saw that it was going to be good for him business-wise to be right in the center of things. He could do things much quicker. He would be right on the spot, right in the midst of all of the trading activity that was going on and he could move, as it were, his sheep and his goats and his cows and bulls and everything. He would be right there where the market was fast and he could move things in a hurry. I really do not know what it was, but we find them right there.

There is an interesting comment by the apostle Paul in II Corinthians 6. It says:

II Corinthians 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

We can look back in retrospect to what God did, or what Lot did. I do know this. Even though I do not know what the specific reason was that Lot went into the city, I do know this from what God has recorded: he was there without good cause. It was a poor choice because he did not **have** to be there. He chose the plain. Choosing the plain under the circumstance that he did was bad enough. But if he had at least stayed out on the plain, away from the city, he would have at least been away from the direct day-to-day contact with the world as represented by the city of Sodom. There is every indication that, unlike Moses who by faith deliberately chose to leave Egypt, Lot deliberately chose to go to Sodom.

This series of verses in II Corinthians 6 is not an appeal for us to break all of our worldly associations. You might recall that Paul urged the Christian partner in a divided marriage to strive to maintain the relationship as long as possible. But rather what this is here in II Corinthians 6 is an appeal to avoid close associations. There is a reason for this. Let's read a little bit more because he's asking a series of rhetorical questions. The answer to these questions is obvious. He says,

II Corinthians 6:14-16 What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore come out from among

them. . . .

Just the opposite of what Lot did. Do not go into it. Come out of it. Do not deliberately make those close associations with the world. It is all right to do business with them. It is all right to work with them. But you do not get hooked up with them.

II Corinthians 6:17 Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.

That last couple of lines there, "I will be a Father to you and you shall be My sons and daughters," seems to hinge on whether or not we are allowing ourselves to get yoked to the world and those associations. The reason that God does not want these close associations with the world is because it almost inevitably leads to compromise with godly standards. It jeopardizes the consistency of the Christian's witness for God because there is a force there, a spiritual force in the world that brings it about because the unbeliever does not share the Christian standards, his sympathies, his goals in life.

Is this unfair that God should ask this of you and me? Remember, He has bought us with a price. The price was the life of His Son and this obligates us to a life of purity, of holiness; that once we accept that sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin, we belong to Him and He is our Master and He says come out of the world and be separate. That is a demand that He puts on us.

Does God ever ask us for something that is not for our good? Of course not, you know the answer to that. And how is this for our good? Because He knows that it is very likely that His people, though they have the Spirit of God, are going to have an extremely difficult time resisting that spiritual force that is going to lead them to compromise on the standards of the Kingdom of God. So we are obligated to purity of life, to holiness, to separation from evil. We owe our allegiance to Him alone and we cannot allow ourselves to not be a fit vessel for Him to live in.

Back to Lot. The lingering was the effect of his decision to move into Sodom because the worldly associations wore down his resistance and his true spirituality was just about gone until he was a man who did not really know what he wanted, and so he procrastinated. He was torn as to what to do when the time came for him to flee. Do you know what he should have done? He should have just cheerfully left. We will see more of this as we go along.

There is no surer way to go backward in your spirituality, to blunt your feelings about sin, to dull your spiritual discernment until you can scarcely tell evil from good, and dry up the source of your spiritual strength, than in a needless mingling with the world. I stress needless because Paul writes in I Corinthians 5:9-10 that to avoid all contact with the immoral one would have to go *out* of the world. There is nothing in the New Testament to indicate separating oneself by moving into a commune, *ala* David Koresh.

There is an interesting boast that was made by David and it is recorded in Psalm 30, I want to look at that just briefly. He says:

Psalm 30:6-7 Now in my prosperity [in my strength. Think of Lot and think of him making the choice, first to step on the plain, and then to step right into Sodom. David went through something very similar.], I said, "I shall **never** be moved." [I am strong enough. I can withstand it.] Lord [this is part of a prayer], by your favor, You have made my mountain stand strong; You hid Your face and I was troubled.

Even a man as strong as David could not stand it and God in His mercy brought trouble, He chastened David, so that David could see that he made a mistake in thinking that he was strong enough to resist. Let him who thinks he stand take heed, the apostle Paul said.

Lot gambled. He played the odds. The record is clear—he lost. I feel that the warning is there because not many of us are going to be able to stand before the spiritual onslaughts of the world with this kind of attitude that is expressed here in Psalm 30: pride, overfed, unconcerned. Remember that. Lot, in his trip into Sodom, became a hesitating, undecided, procrastinating man in the day of trial because through slow deterioration his spiritual strength wasted away.

There is much to consider here about where we choose to live. That is what Lot did. We need to think about that. Where do we choose to live? Where do we choose to work? What kind of occupation do we choose to work at? Who do we choose to date? Who do we choose to marry? Are God and His work given consideration in the choices we make? Are all of our choices dictated by materialism or are they dictated because our eyes, our spiritual eyes, are on the Kingdom of God?

One might say it seems as though Lot made it into the Kingdom because he was, after all, called a righteous man by God's own testimony. Now that is true. But it could have been so much better. I feel confident that he was one of those people that the apostle

Paul had in mind when he wrote I Corinthians 3 and he told those people in Corinth that they were yet carnal. He went on to say to be careful about how you build and he went on to say about these people whose works, what they built, would be tested and tried and if they were found to be wood, hay, and stubble, that they would lose those things even though they themselves might be saved.

You can tell that the apostle Paul did not think that whoever he had in mind did the right thing in the eyes of God. Lot escaped only because God took mercy on him and because it says very directly that God heard Abraham and on the basis of Abraham's intercession on Lot's behalf and on God's own mercy is the only reason that Lot himself was spared. "You shall not tempt the Lord your God," is what Jesus said in Matthew 4. We do not want to do that. Lot put God to temptation and God mercifully intervened.

I do not know how long Lot lived there. Perhaps not long, but I do know this, that its entire effect, the period of time that he was there, was negative. He seems to have affected nothing at all positively. He appears to have been given none of the respect that even the world tends to give one that they know is living the kind of life that men should live. The world may not agree, but at least they will respect it.

Let us look in Genesis 19 what the world had to say about Lot as he buzzed around there trying to figure out what to do. Remember this, the angel said, "Flee, get out of here, save your lives." What should Lot have done? He should have just left in faith. They did not say, "Go try and convert the city. Go get your family together." They just said, "Leave." What would a person of faith do? Do you begin to see the evidence of what Lot did in lingering? In going to appeal to these people that it was not God's will that he do those kinds of things at that time.

Genesis 19:9 [The people of the city] said, "Stand back! Then they said, "This one [meaning Lot] came in to sojourn [it seems to indicate to reside temporarily], and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them."

His word carried no weight with those people. They did not respect him. There was apparently nothing magnetic or attractive or appealing about his way at all, and as we are going to find here in verse 14, even his family showed him very little respect.

Genesis 19:14 So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law who had married his daughters and said, Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city! But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

There was a measure of contempt there. He seemed to them as though one who mocked. It is almost as if they are saying, "Who cares for anything you say?" How about his wife? She looked back. How about his daughters? They escaped, and then proceeded to involve him in one of the vilest sins in all of the Bible: incest. This is not unusual for a lingerer because they are despised by their families because those around them cannot deal with the converted person's inconsistency. They are hot, they are cold. They blow this way, they blow that way. They say do this and they do not do this, they do something else, and their life does not live up to the words that they say. So Lot was a man whose works burned, but he himself was saved.

I know that this is not a way that God wants His children to go and even though He mercifully intervenes and saves, He wants His children to enjoy the best of the abundant life and to really be prepared for His Kingdom.

Most of you are familiar with Herbert Lockyer and his "All" series of books: *All the Prayers of the Bible*, *All the Parables of the Bible*, *All the Women of the Bible*, *All the Men of the Bible*. In *All the Men of the Bible*, he says that he believes that Lot is the representative man. I am quoting here:

Perhaps there is no figure in the Bible who represents so many men of today as Lot of Sodom. Where you will find one Abraham, one Daniel, or one Joshua, you will find a thousand Lots.

Lot had much wealth, and relatively speaking, Americans and Canadians and the British have a lot of wealth. But he did not have the abundant life of God because of his choice to coexist with the world whose constant degenerate pressure virtually destroyed his true spirituality. Lot was not a sinner in the normal sense, but he was a small and mean (I do not mean angry, but mean in the sense of small) man in terms of his spirituality.

There is an interesting contrast between Abraham and Lot. Remember that Abraham was probably exceedingly wealthier than Lot was. Even the Bible says that Abraham was "exceedingly wealthy." It does not say that about Lot. God blessed Abraham in a way that He has blessed, I mean materially, few people, but Abraham lived in a tent. Lot lived in a house. There is quite a lesson there because it shows very clearly that Abraham knew and he lived his life in such a way that everybody gets the picture, everybody understands that Abraham was just a pilgrim, that he did not put roots down in this world, but Lot his nephew did. Lot was converted, but he was carnal. He was a man of weak faith; his hopes, his dreams, even though converted, were in the world and

his interest was in the things of this world.

Lot saw some of the same vision but by choice he was firmly anchored in this present world and all of Lot's goodness was virtually wasted because spiritually he was not going anywhere. Do you wonder where John got the idea (I John 2:15-17), that the world passes away? That is exactly what happened to Sodom. It was gone and with it went Lot's house and we have to assume that with it went his cattle, his sheep, his goats, all of his money, everything was gone except what he could carry on his back.

We might say that because Lot was "saved" that there is more than one way to skin a cat because he did make it. To me, yes, there is more than one way to skin a cat. There might be many poor ways of skinning a cat. There might even be some good ways to skin a cat. But there is probably only one best way to skin a cat. Why not choose the best way of doing it? That is the lesson of Lot's life. Why have your works, all that we have built, burnt up? Why not do things the way God says?

You see, God was not in all of his thoughts because he was living by sight and I think that Lot might very well be what we might call the quintessential second-generation Christian. He believed, but all of his passion was spent pursuing the things of this world and the amusements in this world. He was not committed like Abraham was. His faith at best was weak. The whole aim of Abraham's life was to give glory to God, but Lot, though righteous, lived by sight. His aim was essentially to grasp at life, to do it now, to enjoy *it* rather than to working to develop his relationship with God, and it kept him from being fully persuaded.

Why was Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt? I think sometimes we forget or maybe do not know. We might quickly remember she looked back, but why did she look back? Why are we solemnly warned by Christ to remember Lot's wife? He does not say, really, to remember Lot. Remember Lot's **wife**.

Luke 17:24-33 [Christ is speaking] For as the lightening that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. [There is the subject material, the return of Jesus Christ] But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on that day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and

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destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed [Now we are getting close, look at this instruction] In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

In the midst of this instruction regarding the conditions that are going to exist at the time of His return, He specifically draws attention to the awful state of unreadiness, being unprepared, that the people are going to be in then. I want you also to see that the instruction is not to the Pharisees. The instruction is to His disciples. He is warning they better be prepared because the people in the world are going to be going through their normal routines. They are not going to be prepared. They are not going to be ready. There is more than that there. He does not just say, be aware of her. He says, **Remember!** almost as if He is concerned that all of us, all of his disciples, are in danger of forgetting. Urgency! Was she urgent to leave? Was she ready to leave? No she was not. Keep this example in your mind. She appears very suddenly in the story back there in Genesis 19, but again I think it is good to look a little into her background because it is a major part of this mix that we can learn from her.

There is much conjectural evidence to believe that she and Lot were married at the time of the separation from Abraham based upon the fact that their daughters were of marriageable age whenever Sodom was destroyed. And then we are introduced to two of them, but there is an indication that there might have been older daughters because Lot went out, in verse 14, to warn his sons-in-law, which indicates that other daughters were already married and Lot and his wife already had sons-in-law. Lot specifically said about the two daughters who were still at home that they were virgins and had not known a man.

If this is so, Lot's wife had the privilege of a great deal of contact with Abraham, who was the father of the faithful, and her husband was also a converted man. When Abraham received the promises, she was there. When her husband was taken captive, and then Abraham rescued them, she was there. You can read it in Genesis 14. When Melchizedek came out to meet them as they returned from the slaughter of the armies, she was there. She seems to have seen Melchizedek with her own eyes. But she never took advantage of her privileges.

This is not unusual. There are a lot of people in the Bible who experienced similar things. Was there ever a man who seems to be more of a rascal than Joab? I do not

know. But Joab lived with David for years and years. He was with that righteous man, a man after God's own heart. How about Gehazi? He was Elisha's servant and did what he did. How about Demas? Demas was Paul's companion and Demas walked away from that great apostle. What about Judas Iscariot who turned his back on very God in the flesh after three and one-half years of having that kind of a witness?

Lot had a worldly, unbelieving wife who never took advantage of the privileges that were extended to her. I bring this to your attention because God held this unconverted woman responsible for what she had been given and if God holds this unconverted woman responsible, what about you and me?

Let us go back to the book of Hebrews. Remember Lot's wife, an instruction specifically given to the disciples of Christ that applies to the end time. Are we living in the end time brethren? Remember Lot's wife. There is a powerful lesson for you and me here.

Hebrews 3:7-8-Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: Today, [This is quoted from a Sabbath psalm. The *today* that psalm is recorded in refers to the weekly Sabbath.], if you will hear His voice, [The voice of God. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing comes by the Word of God.], do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness.

We could go on and on. The appeal that Paul is making here to these people is that they not harden their hearts. Let's drop down a little further to verse 12.

Hebrews 3:12-13 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "*Today*," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

I do not think that there is anything that so subtly deceives a person as familiarity. Lot's wife was familiar with Abraham. She was familiar with the lessons, with the teachings. She began and she indeed became comfortable with it. The unbelieving heart here does not mean a heart in which there is no belief. All of us have weaknesses in that area, but it is rather a heart in which unbelief or doubt is allowed to control the person's conduct. Familiarity is the influence that all of us must deal with and again, perhaps, this is one of the particular or maybe greatest trials that a second generation Christian or a person accustomed to the kind of prosperity that you and I have lived within these Israelitish nations have to deal with. I do not believe that the familiarity which led her to ignore her

wonderful privilege was Lot's wife's besetting sin though. But rather I believe that it helped to set her up for the worldliness that led to her premature death.

Genesis 19:17-22 So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed." Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords! Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. "See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live." And he said to him, "See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

Her sin appears to be trifling to some. It says in verse 26 that she "looked back." It may seem little, but it reveals a great deal about her character. She directly disobeyed the clear command of God's messenger just given a few verses before that. We read it. I Samuel 15:22-23 says that "to obey is better than sacrifice . . . and . . . rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." She rebelled.

It is a solemn and a fearful thing for one to die quietly in his bed. But to die suddenly in a moment, in the very act of a sin, by the direct imposition of God is a fearful thing indeed. Remember Lot's wife. Jesus did not say, "Remember Korah, Dathan, or Abiram." They died suddenly. He did not say, "Remember Nadab and Abihu, who were burned by the fire of God." He did not say, "Remember Uzzah, whom God struck dead in a moment." He said, "Remember Lot's wife," and it is something that has particular application to those who are going to be living at the time of the end and who are going to be facing the destruction of the very society, the very nation, that they live in and who are going to be living in the midst of the greatest influence of worldliness that has ever appeared on the face of the earth since the time of Noah. *Remember Lot's wife.*

This woman, according to Jesus, tried to save her life, and instead she lost it.

Hebrews 3:16-19 For who, having heard, rebelled? [What? Make the connection with Lot's wife.] For who [the children of Israel in the wilderness], having heard [faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God], rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now

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with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Do you see what is happening here? The apostle Paul is equating, he is making synonymous, faith and obedience, or if we turn it over, unbelief and disobedience, that they are one and the same thing. Unbelief and disobedience are directly linked, they are synonymous. Let us turn that over then. Unless one's faith motivates to obedience, it is not faith, it is merely an esoteric opinion. That is all it is. Do you remember what James said? James corroborates exactly what the apostle Paul said. He said, "Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." "Faith without works is dead." It does not even exist.

What was Lot's wife's sin? She did not believe. It is that simple. She died for her lack of faith which was revealed in her direct rebellion against the messengers of God in looking back. The root cause of her rebellion, of her worldliness, was her unbelief. Because of her unbelief she was not prepared to leave Sodom. Because of her unbelief, she would not obey the command to leave. You can apply this to Lot. You can see that Lot was converted. We will see this a little bit more strongly when we go back to Genesis 19. But Lot was at least converted.

Hebrews 4:1-2 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard [faith comes by hearing] did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

What happened to the children of Israel in the wilderness? Their bodies were strewn from one end to the other because they did not believe the words of God that came through his servant Moses. And their real loss of life in the wilderness was caused by their lack of faith. There was the real problem.

Let us turn to one of the best known scriptures perhaps in all of the Bible, certainly the best known in the New Testament.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Wonderful words. On the surface it appears that God is going to save people on the basis of a simple acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior. But now look at verses 31-36.

John 3:31-36 He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth [the worldly person]. He who comes from heaven [Christ] is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony [no one believes it]. He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. [It is John's way of saying that Jesus perfectly knew and perfectly understood the truth of God and it was spoken to these people by God and they should have believed what He said.] The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Ominous - very ominous words. In terms of faith, what John said in that last paragraph puts this chapter into a very different perspective. Everyone hearing God's word is confronted with a choice: believe it and obey it, or take the chance of dying.

Genesis 19:17, 22 So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed." . . . Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

I wonder if you noticed in these verses, as compared with the rest of the story, that suddenly there is a change in the pronouns from plural to singular. Notice verse 17, "So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that **he** said". One of the messengers speaks. In verse 18 then Lot addresses him and it says in my Bible, "lords." *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary* says, "No, that word lord is singular." Lord. Adonai - the name of God. Is it the name of Melchizedek? Was Melchizedek the one that was there to destroy the city? If it was not, why did he call him Lord, and why in verses 21 and 22 does He takes the authority to himself to destroy the city? "I cannot do anything until you arrive there. And then it says, "The Lord rained down . ." Is the Lord the same one who was the "I" of the previous verse? An interesting sequence.

Not only does *Keil & Delitzsch* say that, but the *Jewish Publication Society*, the *King*

James Version, and the *Revised Standard Version* all say something to reinforce something else that occurred.

Genesis 19:26 But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

We find in a previous verse, verse 23, the sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. The Lord did not rain down the fire and brimstone on Sodom until Lot was safely inside the city of Zoar. Where was Lot's wife? She was not with him. Where was she? She was still out on the plain. Verse 26 is interesting. "But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." According to quite a number of authorities, some of which I mentioned to you, *The Jewish Publication Society*, *The King James Version*, *The Revised Standard Version*, they all say that the correct wording is "she looked back *from behind him*." She was not with him when they got to the city. Lot and his daughters made it to the city Zoar and she did not. It was not merely that Lot's wife looked back, but all along the way from Sodom to Zoar, she was dragging her heels, she was dawdling along, she was wasting time, and what she did in conducting herself in this way gave unmistakable evidence that her heart did not believe what the angel had said to her. God was not really going to destroy all of their possessions. And so she reluctantly left Sodom because she loved the world, and she loved the world because she did not have the faith.

This has two direct applications to us. Think back to Luke 17: "Remember Lot's wife." He says that she sought to save her life and lost it. Lesson number one: When the time comes to flee, **flee!** Do not look back. You can corroborate this with Matthew 24 and Mark 13 in the Olivet prophecy that Jesus gave. He said, "Let him who is on the housetop not come down." He says, "Get out of the city. Flee. Do not look back. Do not get any of your possessions. Leave."

I do not want to minimize the gut wrenching choices of having to do something that this sets up for you and for me, because the implication from the Scripture is that when this occurs there is every possibility that one's family might be spread all over the city, county, state, nation, globe. Are we going to have the belief to leave the city, not just without our material possessions, but how about our children? Are we going to trust God that He will protect them and get them out too? What about a husband? What about a wife? What about grandchildren? This is not an easy thing. But the words of our Lord says, "Remember Lot's wife." And when the time came to flee, they had to wrench her out of the city, and then when they let go of her hand, she dawdled, and kept looking back. It was not just one glance.

The second lesson: Saving ones life also pertains to way of life, manner of living. It includes our hopes, our dreams, our aspirations, our traditions, our attitudes and relationships, all of these things that have come from this world, and the world helps to form and make us what we are, in many cases in opposition to God. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, and this is why John warns in I John 2:15 to love not the world. The world is *cosmos*. It is the world apart from God. It is human society organized and regulated upon false principles, false values, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and it is these things that have made us what we are before God calls us and it is these things that we have to repent of and be converted from.

Brethren, life, conversion, science, tells us that there cannot be a vacuum in life, and when we are swept clean by God's forgiveness and His Holy Spirit, something must be done to keep it clean, to keep it holy, to keep it separated from the world. No man can serve two masters and therefore— please get this—there cannot be neutrality in terms of what it is that gets our loyalty. It will either be God or the world.

I Corinthians 7:13-14 And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.

The way to God was open to Lot's wife because of her husband being converted. The problem was that she failed to take advantage of all the privileges that were given to her: her contact with Abraham, having a converted husband to whom she apparently was little or no help to in this regard, even in all likelihood being witness to Melchizedek Himself and having the two messengers or God, and perhaps Melchizedek Himself come to their rescue before destroying Sodom. She dropped the ball. The lesson is: to whom much is given, much is required.

Remember Lot's wife. In my estimation never has so much been given in the way of opportunity to really know God through His Word than has been given to the end-time church, and yet when Christ said, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?", the question is something each of us must answer individually. Will He find faith in **me**? Or will my loyalties as shown by my conduct really be found elsewhere.

I believe that He will find faith if we seriously take His admonition to remember Lot's wife who was totally unprepared because she had no faith. So we need to be working diligently to build our faith in God by yielding to Him in loyalty in every opportunity life

Faith (Part 4) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

presents us.

Remember Lot's wife.