**Sabbath Day Sermon of July 20, 2019.**

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**The Crucial Lessons from the Story of Lot's Wife**

**Genesis Chapter 19**

The Bible does not tell us Lot’s wife name in Genesis 19:26, as she is only referred to as “Lot’s wife,” but some Jewish writings reflect her name as either Adith or Irith. Many Bible scholars believe Lot’s wife was a native of Sodom which would explain her longing for the area and the people, which some have said may have caused her to turn to see its destruction and turning into a pillar of salt. But we would see in this study that her unbelief was the more reason she lingered behind and then looked back and turned into salt.

Lot was considered a righteous man when he lived with Abraham his uncle but was forced to be separated from Abram because of the lack of resources for both their stock and resources and the infighting between Lot’s servants and the servants of Abraham. Lot chose the land near Sodom, “while Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan” (Genesis 5: 12:5-11; 13:12).

We learn in Genesis 13:13 that “the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.” Just like many cities in America today and in many other nations of the world. Lot was warned that the land was to be destroyed and to leave immediately when two angels in the form of men approached him. After much hesitancy and his home being physically confronted by the men of Sodom seeking the angels and the phrase “that we may know them” meaning to have homosexual relations with lot’s visitors. Lot and his family finally were forced to make the move to escape when the angels laid hold of them and brought them out to safety.

13-15. God Almighty promised to spare Sodom if only ten godly people lived there (18:32). Not even 10 godly people could be found, for the angels arrived to destroy the city. Archaeological evidence points to an advanced but abominably corrupt civilization in this area during Abraham’s day. Most researchers also confirm some kind of sudden and devastating destruction. The story of the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah reveals that the people of Lot’s day had to deal with the same kinds of repulsive sin the world faces today, especially from the LGBTQ Baal Peor community.

Lot had lived so long and so contend among ungodly people that he was no longer a believable witness for God Almighty. He had allowed his environment to shape him, rather than he shaping his environment. My friends, do those who know you see you as a witness of Jesus Christ, or are you just one of the crowd blending in unnoticed? It appears Lot had compromised to the point that he was almost useless to God Almighty. When he finally made a stand, nobody listened. As Christians, we become useless to God Almighty when we are too much like our environment. To make a difference, as Christians we must first decide to be different in our faith and our conduct.

16-29. Lot hesitated, and the angel seized his hand and rushed him and his family to safety. He did not want to abandon the wealth and comfort he enjoyed in Sodom. It was God Almighty’s mercy toward Abraham that was extended to Lot and his family. Because Abraham pleaded for Lot, God Almighty was merciful and saved Lot from the fiery death that engulfed Sodom (James 5:16). Today it is easy for us to criticize Lot for being hypnotized by Sodom when the choice seems so clear to us. However, to be wiser than Lot we must see that our hesitation to obey God Almighty’s Word stems from the false attractions of our culture’s pleasures.

In the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, we see two facets of God Almighty’s character: his great patience by agreeing to spare a wicked city for ten good people, and his fierce anger and destroying both cities. As you grow spiritually, you should find yourself developing a deeper reverent fear of God Almighty because of his anger toward sin, and also a deeper love for God because of his patience when you sin.

Lot’s family was clearly instructed in Genesis 19:17: “Don’t look back, and don’t stop anywhere in the plain!” While en route out of the city, Lot’s wife looked back at the destruction, against the angels’ instruction. As a consequence, she turned into a pillar of salt. She looked back to the smoldering city of Sodom. Clinging to the comforts of the past. She was unwilling to turn completely from sin. Are you looking back longingly at sin, at your old life-style while trying to move forward with God Almighty? In that case, you can’t make progress with God Almighty as long as you are holding on to pieces of your old life. Jesus said it this way in Matthew 6:24: “no man can serve two masters, for either you will hate one, and love the other; or else you will hold the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

Where is Lot's wife mentioned in the Bible? Interestingly Lot’s wife was not specifically mentioned until the family was visited by the two angels. One can safely surmise that Lot and his wife were married sometime after he had left Haran and was present during journeys that followed. Scripture mentions Abraham’s wife Sarah, but conspicuously does not even name Lot’s wife as being among the traveling number. We can assume Lot was married for some time because his daughters were of the age capable of marriage themselves at the time of the angels’ visit.

If you ask, “What are the lessons from Lot’s wife for believers today? We can learn much from the actions and desires of Lot’s wife. As mentioned earlier, Lot was described as a righteous man who chose to live amidst an increasingly sinful people. Now let’s look at the lessons believers can glean from this story:

Lot’s wife assisted in entertaining the angels when they visited the house, warning the family of Sodom’s impending destruction. She was there and saw the miracle when the angels smote the homosexuals with blindness. Often, we don’t receive such a blatant warning of judgment, but the Holy Spirit is merciful enough to draw sinful behaviors or conditions to our attention. By all accounts, God Almighty was merciful to include Lot’s wife in the command to evacuate before the destruction. One can presume Lot’s wife was not a believer, neither was her sons-in-law and their wives who were her daughters. The warning could be drawn as a parallel to her lack of conviction, that is, her unbelief in God Almighty.

In Romans 12:2, the believer in Jesus Christ is strengthened by the promises of His guidance. Paul wrote, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God Almighty, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Faith requires both feet and no straddling. Lot’s wife was so associated and entangled with the world, she could not exist without at least a glance back to what she was leaving behind. This reminds us of Racheal Jacob’s wife held on to her father’s idol and died for it because of unbelief (Geneses 31:32-34; 35:16-19). In Luke 17:31, we are warned concerning God Almighty’s judgment: “On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back.” On judgment day, everyone will be judged apart from their families, husbands apart from their wives, and the children apart from their parents.

Similarly, many who are killed or injured by house fires are those who go back into the blaze to save valuables. When we decide to follow Jesus Christ, we must fully repent from the past behaviors which drew us into a realization of our sinful state.

We consider the teaching in Zephaniah 1:12 which warns of a time when “I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, ‘the Lord will not do good, nor will he do ill.’” Others say in Ezekiel 9:9, “The Lord has forsaken the earth, and the Lord cannot see us or what we do.” But the Word of God Almighty says that a person who believes, yet physically allows the flesh to be satisfied by the world, denies God Almighty’s righteousness.

Jesus, in Revelation 3:15, rebuked the Laodicean church for its lukewarm condition. He declared, “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. I would that you were either cold or hot; because you are neither, I will spue you out my mouth.”

Remember your first love and flee the bondage of sin. Some have commented that Lot allowed his wife to unduly pressure him to abide in Sodom. That she knew who she married and his blessed lineage and commitments, yet she had no desire for such spiritual commitment for herself. The question we ask is if Lot’s wife was made ever aware of Lot’s lineage and commitments to God Almighty? Did Lot ever teach his wife who was a Sodomite the way of the Lord? Again, how much of the way of the Lord did Lot and his wife teach their two daughters and their son in-laws? (Genesis 19:14).

In 2 Peter 2:6-8, we learn of Lot’s travails when he spoke of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Peter wrote that God Almighty “if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly in any generation; and if he rescued Lot, who was greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked. Just as you and I experience today, Lot lived among them day after day, he was probably troubled in his soul over their Sodomites lawless deeds that he saw and heard.” We are not told if Lot did anything about the evil going on around him, except for the time he did not allow the homosexuals who came to his door to take his visitors and defile them.

When we are convicted of the sin in our lives, there is no time for delay. We must flee from it immediately. God Almighty always gives us “an out” when something or somewhere is not beneficial for our spiritual health. Lot understood God Almighty’s warning and knew it was serious. Even though Lot’s wife heard the same warning, she did not full-heartedly exit Sodom because she had doubted it would happen. The same is true for you when you fail to act according to God Almighty’s direction. There is at least a hint of doubt and hope God Almighty will “wink his eye” or turn away on this one.

Christians are to set their hearts on things from above, not things of the world. Lot’s wife, whether or not a native Sodomite, lived in Sodom before her marriage to Lot. Some have said she knew of but probably did not understand the ramification of her husband’s residence in Sodom. However, she forsook her husband’s spiritual responsibilities by satisfying her own desire to live in Sodom. If we may ask, “What was her husband’s spiritual responsibilities she did not understand? Could it be that Lot never spent the time to teach his wife the way of the Lord and his spiritual responsibilities? Where did the angels find Lot on their arrival to Sodom, in the gate of the city, that is, he was probably a member of the city council. We are not told if he did anything as the city council member, to try to stop the corruption and the abomination in the city of Sodom?

In 2 Peter 2:9-10, we are taught about judgment regardless of family connection. Peter wrote, “The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the Day of Judgment. This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise the authority of God Almighty. Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on God Almighty and his people.”

In Colossians 3:1-10, believers in Jesus Christ are encouraged to: “Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things,” and to “put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. “

Lot’s wife was turned into a pillar of salt when she ran out of the city and looked back to her old life of fun despite the warning not to do so. When a person is so indwelled and so enthralled with “the world”, he or she ultimately meet the same demise. Christians are called to be the “salt of the Earth” as salt has always been used as a preservative for foods. When we are the correct witnesses for Jesus Christ, we exemplify his goodness and lead others to seek a relationship with Him. Ironically, by becoming a pillar of salt, Lot’s wife became an eternal part of Sodom, just as many Christians today in disobedience to God Almighty’s commands to come out of Babylon are walking to hell thinking they will go to heaven.

Lot and his family knew of the sin and corruption within the confines of Sodom. Yet, they both continued to blend in among the worldly society. The angels warned the family of the imminent and complete destruction. The evil and sinful desires of the Sodomite society was fully illustrated when the men of the Sodom sought “relations” with the angels.

In 1 Corinthians 2:4, Paul explains, “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power.” Believers in Jesus Christ have the same divine inspiration today by and through the presence of the Holy Spirit. The gift of discernment allows the Christian to spiritually interpret the intentions of people and situations. His guidance can always be trusted because he is the “Spirit of truth.”

We are reminded of this assurance in John 16:13, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” The question is how many of us are ready to hear what the Spirit our teacher says? How many out there will understand, and how many will learn their lessons and obey.

“Close to grace isn't sufficient.” As Christians we are specifically told in 2 Peter 2:7 that Lot was a righteous man based on Abraham’s promise. He was the nephew of Abraham, who was promised that his family would be spiritually prosperous. Lot’s wife shared many of the adventures and trials with her husband. During a period of unrest, Lot was taken captive and ultimately rescued by Abraham. Lot’s wife experienced this ordeal as well, yet, remained lost and untouched. Lot’s wife arose early the morning the family was to escape Sodom. She made the first step toward safety by beginning the flight with her husband and their two daughters.

However, she then lingered behind before ultimately looking back toward the city. By her hesitancy and disobedience, she was struck dead not realizing her “grace period” had expired. Even though Lot was caught up in the sinful state of Sodom, he was ultimately “saved” from destruction by God Almighty’s mercy extended to him because of Abraham’s promise.

No one can make you to come to Jesus Christ or to obey God Almighty’s commandments but yourself. For example, King Agrippa, in Acts 26:28, told Paul “Do you think in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” Despite the preaching and witness of Paul, Agrippa was able to see the benefits of accepting Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior but was unwilling to make such a commitment. You see, it comes down to the choice which only you can make.

“Backsliding is gradual.” We read from the scripture that Lot’s wife lingered behind during the rush to vacate Sodom. When we decide to follow Jesus Christ, we make the faithful effort to stand by his side. However, as time passes, we can find ourselves drifting back and settling into our past habits and company. Consider the fall of Peter in the second chapter of Luke. In 3 Luke 22:23-33, we see Peter’s misplaced self-confidence. Here, as in the gospel of Mark, Peter insisted he was ready to go with Jesus Christ no matter whether it is to prison or death. Peter’s conceit then soon led to a life lacking in prayer.

In Luke 22:40, Peter was instructed by Jesus to pray, but instead was found asleep when Jesus Christ returned. Just as Lot’s wife “lingered behind,” we are told in Luke 22:54, Peter “followed at a distance.” When we find separation from Jesus Christ and distracted, there is a hindering of the fellowship and channel of communication. Have you noticed yourself lingering behind, away from your former love for the things of God Almighty? Beware, and know that you’re plausible and well arranged genuine excuses do not cut it (Acts 5:1-11).

Why a strong family needs a strong godly mother. Immediately after Lot’s wife perished, each of his two daughters contrived the plan to get him drunk and “lie with him” to preserve his seed. In this pitiful sequel to the story of the destruction of Sodom, we see two women compelled to preserve their family line as if it were in there hands, than God Almighty’s. They were driven by desperation, they feared they would never marry. For this reason, they stooped to incest, showing their acceptance of the morals of Sodom. When we are desperate for what we feel we must have, we are most likely to sin.

The daughters' reason in Genesis 19:31, which is their excuse to now put into practice what they learned in Sodom: “There is no man around here to give us children—as is the custom all over the earth.” They certainly all could have benefited from the presence, wisdom, and guidance of a godly loving mother. In Proverbs 31:12, we learn that a righteous woman brings her husband “good, not harm, all the days of her life.” In verse 27, we are told of her priorities: “She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.”

Losing your life to Jesus is a victory. In Luke 17:32-33, Jesus Christ says, "Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it.”

My friends, as you follow after God Almighty, know that every bit of His Word is for you. His truths are worth looking toward, holding onto, and learning from, every day.

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