

Lot's Bad Decision

M. W. Bassford

3-9-08

Introduction.

- A. Much of the time, the truly important decisions of our lives aren't decisions we recognize as important at the time. They're important because they interact with other decisions to affect us in ways we would never have imagined. For example, one of the most important decisions of my life was the decision to intern with the First Court of Appeals in Houston after my first year of law school, in the summer of 2001. It wasn't important because I eventually got a job with the court or with anyone else because of my work there; in fact, I didn't. It ended up being important because, in my search for a place to stay over the summer, a hymnwriter friend of mine told me that her nephew was looking for a roommate in northwest Houston. I ended up rooming with him and worshiping at the nearby Kleinwood Church of Christ. While there, I met the young lady who, four years and several girlfriends later, would eventually end up becoming my wife. I had no idea that such a thing would happen, and, in retrospect, I recognize the providential hand of God guiding me as He had planned.
- B. Of course, it is not only God who wants to shape the course of our lives. It is not only God who nudges us toward inconsequential decisions that will have dramatic consequences years later. Our enemy the devil is constantly plotting to ruin each one of us, and if we are not godly and wise in the decisions that we make, he will use even the tiniest openings that we give him to make us miserable here and in the hereafter. We see Satan exploit just such an opening in the story that begins in Genesis 13:5-9. Everything seems innocuous in this part of the story. We see two of God's people settling a dispute in a godly way. Abram, because he loves his nephew and wants the best for him, offers him the choice of whatever grazing land he wants so that their herdsmen no longer quarrel. However, the consequences of the choice that Lot makes here will forever change his life and the lives of his family. Let's explore them now as we consider Lot's bad decision.

I. The Decision.

- A. We see the decision itself in the text of Genesis 13:10-13. It's pretty evident what's on Lot's mind here, and what's not on Lot's mind. When Abram asks him to pick grazing land, Lot considers his decision in terms of grazing land. He can try to pasture his flocks and herds in the sometimes barren hills of Canaan, or he can claim for himself the plain of the lower Jordan. As the text makes clear, the plain is a fabulously rich place. It offers the kind of grazing that just couldn't be had anywhere else in Palestine. From an agricultural perspective, this is a no-brainer. Lot makes the financially wise choice and chooses the plains for himself.
- B. What Lot doesn't understand, and what Satan certainly does understand, is that this isn't just a financial decision. It's also a decision about where Lot is going to live and what kind of people he and his family are going to associate with. Lot isn't pitching his tent toward nowhere; he's pitching his tent toward Sodom. He's choosing to live right next to some cities that even today are famous for their wickedness. He makes his decision on the basis of something other than righteousness, and that's going to cost him in the end.
- C. Folks, this tells us something crucial about the decisions that we make. Whatever opportunities present themselves to us, the first question we need to ask is, "What does God want me to do? How is this going to affect my service to God?" If we don't, if we start putting righteousness behind other things that seem more important at the time, we're making the same mistake as Lot. Just like he did with Lot, Satan may use money to tempt us. He may point us toward some employment that will have us working with corrupt people. He may dangle a job in front of us that will have us living and working far away from any congregation of the faithful. He may give us an opportunity to work that takes away the time that we spend with our families. Every time, from a financial perspective, it's going to look like a job we should take. Satan knows he catches more flies with honey than with vinegar. But if we forget about God, and don't make pleasing Him the first factor in our decision, we are inevitably drifting toward Satan, even if the decision appears good.
- D. Of course, this doesn't have to be about employment. It doesn't even have to be about money, even. It can be the decisions we make about the people we associate with. It can be the decisions we make about the things we do for fun. It can be, in fact, any of the decisions of our lives. No matter what, though, the first question through our minds has to be the same. It has to ask what God wants us to do first.

II. Immediate Consequences.

- A. Lot didn't do that. He didn't think about God first, and through the next several chapters of Genesis, we see the consequences keep piling up. The first thing that happens to Lot because he pitched his tent toward Sodom is that he ends up associating with the wicked people of Sodom. We see the classic example of the evil nature of these people in Genesis 19:1, 4-5. Two angels of God, of all things, come to Sodom. Lot invites them in, but before bedtime, the men of the city surround Lot's house and demand that the angels be brought out so that the men of Sodom can have homosexual relations with them. This is evil on so many levels. It's a

violation of the Biblical prohibition of rape, it's a violation of the sacred traditions of hospitality, and it's a violation of the will of the God who created them male and female. And who are these disgustingly wicked men? Why, they're the ones whom Lot chose for his neighbors!

- B. This does not make Lot happy. As we read his sad story, we often forget that Lot was a godly man, but he was. 2 Peter 2 tells us that Lot's righteous soul was daily tormented by the wickedness he saw around him. He hated the things that the men of Sodom and Gomorrah did, but there he was, stuck in the midst of them.
- C. If we make the same mistake as Lot did, we will have to deal with the same sort of vexation of our righteous souls that Lot did. Once we start putting God second, we'll have to deal with the complaints from the part of our conscience that wants to put Him first. To return to our workplace example, it may be that because of our bad decision, we, like Lot, have to tolerate the grossly immoral. It may be that we have to deal with the constant inconvenience of driving two hours each way to church services. It may be that we ache inside at not being with our kids because we're at work. That's the part of us that's saying, "This isn't right."
- D. That's an unpleasant way to live, but it's certainly not the only consequence of choosing to live in proximity to Sodom. It also starts affecting the way that we ourselves think. Look at what Lot says to the lustful Sodomites in Genesis 19:6-8. Rather than rejecting the advances of those wicked men and trusting in God to protect him, Lot starts compromising with evil because his own way of thinking has been corrupted by Sodom. He offers his daughters to them, which certainly wasn't any more what God's plan was than what those men originally intended. He lies to them too, telling them that these daughters of his who are actually married have never known a man. Things that are still important to God are no longer important to Lot.
- E. This can happen to us too, friends. Once we put ourselves in proximity to evil, we begin to accept evil. We begin to see the grossest forms of wickedness as just not a big deal anymore. Because driving to church two hours one way is such a hassle, making it to every service becomes less important. Because we've chosen to make more money instead of spending time with our children, that time with them becomes something we see as a luxury, not a necessity. Just like Lot, we've let Satan get a foothold inside our minds.

III. Longer-Term Consequences.

- A. Sadly, the consequences for Lot's life didn't stop there. He also ended up losing the very thing that he had hoped to gain by his bad decision. Look at the record of Genesis 19:12-13, 30. The iniquity of Sodom becomes so hateful to God that he decides to obliterate the cities of the plain. He warns Lot to escape, and Lot flees with little more than the clothes on his back. He ends up living with his two daughters in a cave in the mountains. Folks, I guarantee you that those weren't the results that Lot had in mind! He went to the cities of the plain to make his fortune, not to lose it—yet that's exactly what happened to him.
- B. The same thing will be true for us once we start trusting in money to provide for us and not in God. Most of us don't regard wealth as an end in itself; instead, we value money for the things it will provide for us, because we think those things will make us happy. Friends, there is no lasting happiness down that road. Certainly, we need some level of income to provide for ourselves and our families, and God has promised we will have that. But once we leave the realm of needs, and start getting into the realm of wants, especially the realm of wants created by the commercials on TV, we aren't going to find anything that makes our lives meaningfully better. We can work and work and work to the exclusion of all else, but it won't give us what we really want.
- C. The saddest result of all, though, of Lot's decision to pitch his tent toward Sodom, was what happened to his family. We see the first wave of disaster in Genesis 19:14. When he told his sons-in-law to flee the wrath of God, they thought he was joking and stayed in Sodom. We don't know whether they were righteous or wicked, but we do know that they died there along with all of the evil ones. The second wave of Lot's personal calamity is revealed in Genesis 19:17, 26. Lot's wife began to flee along with him. She had heard the angels warn him not to look back. She looked back anyway, and she died. The Bible doesn't say why she looked back. It may be that she didn't take the word of God seriously enough to follow it. It may be that she loved her home and didn't want to leave it. Whatever the reason, though, she died as a consequence of Lot's bad decision. That left Lot with just his two daughters, living in the cave above Zoar that we've already looked at. What Lot discovered, though, is that even if you take your daughters out of Sodom, you can't take Sodom out of your daughters. Look at the horrifying story recorded in Genesis 19:31-33. Before the story is through, Lot's second daughter does the same horrifying thing as the first. Sure, both of them were still breathing and walking around, but they were every bit as dead to what Lot wanted them to be as the others.
- D. Friends, if we make a career out of putting God second in our decisions, we stand an excellent chance of seeing the same devastation in our families. If we allow them to be around corrupt people, those corrupt people will corrupt them. If we allow assembling with the saints to become an optional thing in our lives, to our children, it will become an option that they choose not to exercise at all. If we don't spend as much time as we can with our children, we're letting somebody else raise them instead of us. There are no guarantees here, of course. It's not a certain thing that all will go well with our families if we put God first. There are no guarantees, but it's still our responsibility as spouses and parents to do everything we can right.

Conclusion. If you've been making bad decisions in your life, it's not too late to turn around and seek God.