

THE SPIRITUAL DECLINE OF A BELIEVER

GENESIS 19; 2 PETER 2:6-9

Introduction

Last Sunday we began to look at chapter nineteen of the book of Genesis. I said that we were going to look at this chapter from three different perspectives:

1. Sodom—There is the perspective of God’s judgment of an exceedingly sinful people that should stand as a warning to every city and every nation. We saw:

Sodom’s Wickedness Revealed. (Pride, Gluttony, Idleness, Oppression, Haughtiness, and Immorality)

Sodom’s Wake-up Call Not Regarded.

Sodom’s Woeful Recompense.

2. Lot and his family—There is the perspective of a righteous man falling into a spiritual decline that culminates in some devastating consequences in his life and the life of his family.
3. Abraham—There is the perspective of righteous Abraham praying to God in an earlier chapter and God answering the prayers of righteous Abraham in this chapter.

So, today we are going to look at this chapter from the standpoint of Lot and his family as we see: “The Spiritual Decline Of A Believer.”

We just read where Peter calls Lot a “*righteous man.*” **One can only become righteous by grace through faith.** Though he was a righteous man, we will see some key mistakes that Lot made in his life that pulled him away from living a life that was pleasing to God.

I believe the life of Lot stands as a testimony to us as believers to be vigilant in our walk with God.

There are always those who think that spiritual decline won’t happen to them. But, we need to remember the warning Paul gave to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 10:12—*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*”

THE SPIRITUAL DECLINE OF A BELIEVER

GENESIS 19; 2 PETER 2:6-9

Paul not only warns us of the possibility of spiritual decline, but he suggests that the greatest candidates for it are those who think it could never happen to them.

What happened to Lot? How did he end up in such a wicked place like Sodom and Gomorrah? How did he wind up so far from where he should have been in his walk with God. What caused him to lose both his testimony and his family. How could he stray so far from his roots?

I. SPIRITUAL DECLINE IS GRADUAL.

As we observe Lot, we should not think for a moment that Lot’s condition as revealed in chapter nineteen just happened. The spiritual condition that we find Lot in was the result of a gradual, but continual decline in Lot’s life.

A. Lot’s Family. (Genesis 11:26-32)

Lot’s father, Haran, and Abraham were brothers.

1. Lot’s Father Died In The Homeland – Ur of the Chaldees. (11:28)

2. We find that Terah, Abraham’s father and Lot’s Grandfather, picked up the family and headed toward the land of Canaan. They came to a place called Haran and they settled there.

Some think it is interesting that the place where they settled was of the same name as Terah’s son, Lot’s father, who died. They say that it might mean that Terah may not have been able to move beyond his son’s death.

But there is a slight difference in the Hebrew word translated.

Mountainieer = hawrawn (Haran the man)

Parched = khawrawn (Haran the place)

3. Terah eventually died in Haran.

THE SPIRITUAL DECLINE OF A BELIEVER

GENESIS 19; 2 PETER 2:6-9

B. Abram's Call. (Genesis 12:1ff Cf. Acts 7:2-3)

1. Abram (who eventually became known as Abraham) obeyed the Lord by faith and left Haran to go to the Promised Land.
2. Lot tagged along with his Uncle Abram.
We are not told, but quite possibly this was an act of faith in the Lord on Lot's part.

Unfortunately, Lot did not continue in his uncle's footsteps, but instead he began to make choices in his life that would bring him to the spiritual bankruptcy we see in chapter nineteen.

C. Lot's Spiritual Decline.

A. The First Step. (13:10-12)

The first step of Lot's decline started many years before chapter nineteen.

It started back in chapter thirteen where we find Abram and Lot separating for the sake of peace. After Abram told Lot to choose his direction, **look at what we are told in verse ten.**

Scripture says Lot looked, he saw, and he chose on the basis of **what he saw**. In other words, **Lot was guided by his flesh, not the LORD.**

Lot chose the plain of Jordan. What seemed to be very nice was really not, for we are told several times that the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked sinners.

As Abram and Lot separated, **look at what we are told in verse twelve.** Lot pitched his tent right outside of and toward this sinful city.

THE SPIRITUAL DECLINE OF A BELIEVER

GENESIS 19; 2 PETER 2:6-9

B. The Second Step. (14:12)

The second step in Lot's spiritual decline is found in chapter fourteen.

In this chapter the city of Sodom is attacked and the people living there are taken captive. **Verse twelve shows us the decline of Lot.**

In chapter thirteen Lot is living outside of Sodom; in chapter fourteen Lot is living in Sodom.

C. The Third Step. (19:1)

In this chapter we find that Lot not only lives in Sodom at this point, but is also one of the leaders within Sodom.

To be sitting at the gate of Sodom suggests that Lot was in a high-ranking position within the city. It was at the city gate that many of the decisions and judgments were made.

For Lot to be sitting at the gate of a sinful city such as Sodom suggests that the inhabitants of the city accepted him (which also suggests compromise on Lot's part.)

Though he was a righteous man, his spiritual decline kept him from being a champion of righteousness and justice in a city that was saturated with sin.

So we see the gradual process of Lot's spiritual decline. At the heart of this gradual process were Lot's sensual and sinful desires.

The apostle John in his first epistle spoke about these sensual and sinful desires when he spoke about the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life in 1 John 2:15-17.

THE SPIRITUAL DECLINE OF A BELIEVER

GENESIS 19; 2 PETER 2:6-9

These lusts, John tells us, are of the world. The gradual process of spiritual decline takes place when God's people are led by their sinful desires instead of the Lord. Believers are not to be led by the same things that lead the rest of the world.

We begin to see the sensual aspect of Lot's demise when we compare Lot with Abram. When they separated, Abram was willing to trust the Lord to lead him, whereas Lot was led by what he saw.

Abram lived in a tent, whereas, Lot desired more than a tent and would eventually move into a house.

Abram was a pilgrim looking for the celestial city, whereas Lot was a citizen, enjoying the benefits of the world. His life was deeply rooted in Sodom.

As God's people we are by no means free from the temptations of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, but we are free from being slaves to them.

The gradual process of spiritual decline takes place when we begin to give in to and be consumed with the sensual and sinful desires that belong to this world.

Throughout the Bible we can find men of God falling into spiritual decline, a decline that was a gradual process.

King David did not wake up one day and just say "*I think I am going to commit adultery today.*" It was a gradual process of leaving sinful desires unchecked and not dealt with. It could have started with a small sin, but gradually his inability to deal with sin would lead him to a moral earthquake in his life.

When we hear about Christian leaders falling, we need to understand that it just didn't happen overnight.

THE SPIRITUAL DECLINE OF A BELIEVER

GENESIS 19; 2 PETER 2:6-9

It was a gradual process, a process that came about from some moral fault lines within their lives.

When earthquakes take place, they don't just happen. There are things taking place beneath the surface long before the earthquake comes and destroys lives.

The spiritual decline of believers is the same way. There are things happening beneath the surface long before we see the moral earthquake take place.

When God's people don't deal with the underlying sin issues then, they ultimately lead to a spiritual decline. And when we don't deal with the spiritual decline, it can have destructive consequence in our lives and the lives of our loved ones.

Spiritual decline is gradual. . .

II. SPIRITUAL DECLINE IS DESTRUCTIVE.

As the story of Lot unfolds in this chapter of Genesis, we begin to see the destructiveness of his spiritual decline.

Now Lot was a righteous man, but he has decided to seek the best of both worlds.

He wanted all the comfort of heaven and salvation, but at the same time he wanted all the temporal joys and benefits of a sin-cursed world that is doomed for destruction.

Because of wanting his feet in both worlds, Lot's spiritual decline would bring on:

A. Destructive Compromise.

1. He Compromised His Convictions.

As Lot gave in to and was led by his worldly lust, he would begin to compromise his very own righteous convictions.

THE SPIRITUAL DECLINE OF A BELIEVER

GENESIS 19; 2 PETER 2:6-9

Scripture tells us in second Peter Lot was disturbed by the sinfulness within the city of Sodom. It literally “*vexed*” his soul day and night.

Even though he was displeased with the sinfulness of the city, he would still become a prominent leader in the city sitting at the gate, upholding the unrighteous laws that governed the city.

Instead of sitting at the gate of the city enjoying the acceptance of the people, Lot should have stood at the gate of the city proclaiming the righteousness of the Lord not worried about what the people in the city thought.

But Lot, instead of following the way of the Lord would follow the way of the world and compromise his righteous convictions.

Not only did *Lot compromise his convictions*, but. . .

2. **He Compromised His Character.**

After the heavenly guest entered Lot’s house to enjoy his hospitality we are told that Lot would receive some other visitors from within the city. (Vs 4)

Do you see the perversity of the city in these verses? Men, both old and young, wanted to have sexual relations with the two angels, whom they thought were men.

Lot found himself in a interesting situation. He had a choice to make. He could comply with the request and let them have the men or he could refuse the request and stand up for righteousness.

THE SPIRITUAL DECLINE OF A BELIEVER

GENESIS 19; 2 PETER 2:6-9

Lot chose to protect his guests, but he did not choose to stand up for righteousness. Instead he made a proposal that was a compromise of his righteous character.(Vs 8)

Protecting his guests was noble. But sacrificing his two virgin daughters can hardly be considered a quality of a holy and righteous character.

The only moral choice in this situation would have been for Lot to stand up for righteousness and not give in to unrighteousness.

Lot’s spiritual decline compromised his righteous convictions and righteous character. This *destructive compromise*, in turn, brought about:

B. **Destructive Influence.**

Lot had a great opportunity to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world in Sodom and Gomorrah, but that opportunity passed when he started in his downward spiral.

Had the Lord called Lot to Sodom, we might have had a different story concerning Lot and his influence. However, because Lot was led to Sodom by his own worldly desires, he would fail be a positive influence to the inhabitants of the city.

Instead, Lot would become a destructive influence to the city of Sodom. Even worse, Lot would become a destructive influence upon his own family.

Verses 11-14

These two men told Lot of the coming judgment upon the city and that he needed to get his family out as quick as possible. As Lot tries to get his family together we begin to see that Lot had lost his righteous influence even over his own family because his own spiritual decline.

THE SPIRITUAL DECLINE OF A BELIEVER

GENESIS 19; 2 PETER 2:6-9

The reason that Lot had lost his influence is clearly stated by Lot's actions in **vs 15-16**.

Here we see Lot, knowing that the city was about to come under judgment, *and he lingered*. He lingered because he had fallen so in love with the world that it was hard to let go. His life was deeply entrenched in wicked Sodom.

It was so hard for him that the angels had to literally grab their hands and drag them out of the city. Lot wasn't rescued because he was willing to leave the city. Lot was rescued because the mercy of God grabbed hold of this backslidden believer and rescued him from the coming judgment.

If Lot hesitated in leaving the city, then we can see why he was unable to positively influence others to leave the city.

This destructive influence that Lot had would even affect those who left the city with Lot. In **Vs 17**, Lot and his family are commanded to hurry and go to the mountains and to not to look back. That would prove destructive to Lot's wife (**Vs 26**).

Lot hesitated to leave, and his wife did not want to leave. She would become another casualty of the destructive influence of Lot's spiritual decline.

Spiritual decline brings about a destructive compromise and a destructive influence. But Lot's story does not end there, for in **verses 30-38** we see that the spiritual decline leads to a:

C. **Destructive Demise.**

There is a great deal of irony in these last eight verses of chapter nineteen. The two virgin daughters that Lot was so willing to sacrifice to the men of Sodom would end up sleeping with Lot in an incestuous encounter. Both daughters would become pregnant, and both would give birth to sons.

THE SPIRITUAL DECLINE OF A BELIEVER

GENESIS 19; 2 PETER 2:6-9

The very fact that the last time we really hear from Lot we find him in a drunken, incestuous relationship is enough evidence to show the destructive demise of those who love the world instead of loving the Lord.

But even greater evidence of Lot's destructive demise is found in the two son's born to him through his own daughters.

(Vs 36-38)

These two sons would become the father of the wicked Moabites and the Ammonites.

These two groups of people would become bitter enemies of God's people.

Conclusion

Lot's life did not have to end this way.

Lot could have walked by faith and not by sight and avoided all of this.

Lot could have walked in the way of the Lord instead of the way of the world.

Lot's story is a great lesson and warning for God's children. Don't love the world or anything in the world. You cannot love the world and love the Lord like you should at the same time.

We must do a spiritual check-up everyday. The only hope we have as God's people of avoiding a similar spiritual decline is by coming to Jesus everyday and asking him to give us his power to deal with those areas in our life that could lead to spiritual decline.

Some here today may have already traveled down Lot's path and you find yourself in a destructive situation on account of your own worldliness. But there is hope. Turn to Jesus today and he will forgive you and help you. He may not take all the consequences away, but he will make you whole again and give you a fresh start. Ask the Lord to change your heart.