

Lot's Unwise Choice

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[0 : 00] Well, please turn with me again to Genesis, on to chapter 14. We'll read again in verse 11 of chapter 14.

So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their provisions and went their way.

They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions and went their way.

And so on. I'm returning to this part of scripture this evening.

We looked at Genesis in chapter 13, the last Lord's Day evening, about Lot and Abram and their choices.

[1 : 18] And how they planned out their futures. And we saw some lessons from it. We re-read this evening part of that chapter, Genesis 13.

And there is a real clue given in it about the wisdom or otherwise of Lot's decision.

We read in chapter 13, verse 12, that Lot moved his tent as far as Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.

There was a very strong hint given in that verse about what would happen.

About what might unfold. There was a strong hint given that Lot's choice was unwise.

[2 : 27] Well, as we read on into chapter 14, we can read further on in Genesis, but even just reading on into chapter 14, we begin to see the fruits of that decision.

And we begin to see what he got himself caught up in. Sort of thing that we ought to have the wisdom to avoid.

We read in this chapter, well, it begins with a list of names and places. And these names don't really mean too much to us.

There's some things you can discern from them. There's something interesting about them. If you take what's written before in Genesis chapter 9 and 10, and you take things later on, some of the things we're told about the nations are interesting, but generally we come to this chapter and it's just a list of names.

And yet, the scripture tells us these names, and repeats these names a few times in this chapter.

We're told here about a war that took place, and Lot and all his stuff, all his possessions, everything that he'd acquired, was caught up in this.

[3 : 46] And it looked like Lot had lost everything. But Abram, his brother, rose to the challenge and went and saved him.

There's lessons to learn in this chapter. And I'm sure there are many lessons to learn in this chapter. But I want to consider three things with you this evening, as we look at these verses.

And as we draw near the end of a year, and I don't know if you plan forward, or make New Year's resolutions, or whatever, at the turn of a year, or review what's gone before.

Some people do. And I think the things that we learn in this chapter are useful for those kind of thoughts to direct us.

Well, the first thing that I want to consider with you, one of the lessons from this chapter, is just how insecure are the things the world promises.

[4 : 51] Just how insecure are the things that the world promises. Lot had made his decision.

And remember what he based his decision on. He lifted up his eyes and he looked, and he saw the whole valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere.

It was lovely. It even says it was like the Garden of Eden. It was like Egypt, where he'd just come out of, and probably saw some benefits of. And he looked at that and he saw it.

And he clearly saw some benefits in Sodom. Because he went and pitched his tent right beside it. And I'm sure he saw these established cities, with commerce, and culture, and stability. And he looked and thought, well, I'm going to go there. When we come to this chapter, we read about the very first war recorded in Scripture.

[5 : 59] As far as we know, there were no wars before this point. Now, there may well have been, but this is certainly the first war recorded in Scripture.

The war is a terrible thing. War changes everything. All sorts of confusion, and chaos, and trouble, come with war. I think, if we do a little bit of analysis on some of these names of the kings, and where they came from, well, let me just look at the first one with you.

He's called Amraphel, the king of Shinar. You know where Shinar was? That's where they built the town of Babel, in the plain of Shinar. That's where a man called Nimrod, started a kingdom. And that's the first time we read of a kingdom, in the Bible. And then from there, he went out and he expanded his kingdom, in different directions. And what we seem to be coming across here is a very elaborate network of kingdoms that are all dependent upon one another, and they all go back to Babel.

God had, of course, confused their languages and scattered them across the world, but they wanted stability, and they had built this political stability. One king would be dependent on another king, and another king would be dependent on another king, and the whole thing was an interconnected network.

[7 : 29] It gave stability for everyone. You know, we've created in our own country, since the Second World War, well, even in the world, we've created a, what somebody planned out is a very stable system, that everyone be interconnected, you know, our economies are all interconnected, and it brings a degree of stability.

Yes, there's fluctuations, but we've benefited from it. Well, they had something like that. But Sodom and their allies, well, they decided that they weren't going to be part of this anymore.

Why did they decide that? Well, we're told in Ezekiel, about Sodom's sin, there was pride, there was excess of food, there was prosperous ease.

That's what Sodom had, and all its allies, all these other cities around them, and they said to themselves, why should we be dependent on these other kings? We're not going to send them taxes anymore.

We're not going to be part of this system anymore. We're going to go it alone. Perhaps they themselves, if you'd asked them a few years earlier, would never have said that that's what they were going to do. And the result was war.

[8 : 54] These other kings, that they were meant to be serving, came and said, well, well, we're going to fight you. And they came, and they defeated all sorts of nations around them, and there was a big pitched battle, in the valley of Siddon, which we're told was the Salt Sea.

The Salt Sea didn't exist at that point. It was the first war. Human lot lifted up his eyes and looked, did he think for one moment, that a war would come, that he might just be caught up in the very first war in human history, if there had been murders and so on before.

Don't quote me, by the way. We can't know for sure that it was the first war. We certainly know what happened from the scripture. Apparently, some of these names we have in archaeological records, some that are in the British Museum.

We can correlate this with other history and with archaeology. Lot got himself caught up in it. What does it tell us? What it tells us is that the world is insecure.

All the things that the world promises, they're so insecure. Who would have thought?

[10 : 13] I often quote to my congregation things that J.C. Ryle has said. And there's one of J.C. Ryle's sayings that I've read often, and I think I've probably quoted it to my congregation a few times, and I'm going to quote it to you this evening.

J.C. Ryle said, I believe it is for the safety, happiness, and comfort of all true Christians to expect as little as possible from churches or governments under the present dispensation to hold themselves ready for tremendous convulsion and changes of all things established and to expect their good things only after Christ's second advent.

He goes on, and he says, I'm well aware that the views I've laid down appear to many persons to be very gloomy and discouraging.

And maybe you might be saying that to yourself. Well, this is very gloomy this evening. Well, J.C. Ryle, he said what he said, and he said, I know some people think it's gloomy, but the only answer I'll give is, is it scriptural?

What does the scripture tell us? Does it tell us to expect stability? That things will carry on, humanly speaking, as they are? That we can depend upon it?

[11 : 35] Does the scripture tell us that? Or does the scripture not rather tell us the world is uncertain? Gather your treasure in heaven.

Put your hope in God. Build spiritual stability. James, in the New Testament, said, about people trading, assuming stability will carry on, he says about them, you know, they're going to go to this city or that city and they're going to make a profit.

And he says, no, no, no, no. You ought to say, if the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.

God willing. Why does J.C. Ryle say, other than his analysis of scripture, but, why does he say that we should hold ourselves ready for convulsions and changes?

Well, I think one of the reasons he says it is because of the principle of sin that's in the world. That's the little hint that we were given in Genesis chapter 13.

[13 : 00] But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked before the Lord. What a hint. A spiritually perceptive person says, God is not mocked.

What will become of these wicked people in this age? God is at work in judgment. And you know, empires come and empires go.

And sometimes they change suddenly. Why? Because God is at work. He raises one up and he puts another one down.

And he does it for his own glory. And he does it to show that he's sovereign. And that nothing in this world can guarantee stability. That he alone is the one that people should trust in.

It's one of the ways that he shows that he is God. That he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We know from another little clue that we have in this chapter and in the one before that this wasn't the end of insecurity for Sodom.

[14 : 18] They, Abram, saved them in the end and they got all their stuff back and their city was back and they traded again. But we have a little clue you've got it in verse 3 here that they all joined forces in the valley of Sidon.

that is the salt sea. That's a little clue. The whole geography was to change. There was to be an incredible cataclysm that struck that part of the world.

We read about it a few chapters on in Genesis. That place doesn't even exist anymore. Who would have thought? Well the lesson for us an important lesson to take with us as we plan and as we look forward.

is how insecure are the things that the world promises. There's another lesson that we should take from this chapter and again it comes from really just a few words that we have in this chapter.

In verse 12 we read they also took Lot the son of Abraham's brother who was dwelling in Sodom and his possessions and went their way.

[15 : 34] Here's the lesson. How easily we are drawn into worldliness. How easily we are drawn into worldliness. What are the verses that make us think of this?

Well it says in verse 12 Lot Abraham's brother who was dwelling in Sodom but where we left him he wasn't dwelling in Sodom in chapter 13 he pitched his tent near to Sodom and now we read he was dwelling in Sodom.

I would be surprised if you haven't heard these verses preached on before and I would be surprised if the preacher has not picked up on these little verses. It seems it's some of the most obvious verses to pick up on.

It just stands out to us. He's living in Sodom but he was never intending to live in Sodom. He was only going to be close to Sodom.

He didn't go to Sodom at the beginning. Now he's living there. The lesson is how easily we are drawn into worldliness.

[16 : 46] He thought he would stay apart but little by little imperceptibly even he was drawn in until he's living there and his daughters are living there and they're married as far as we can make out.

At least two of his daughters are married to people of Sodom and all the family is there. But Lot was drawn in into worldliness or into the very heart of it.

Now I think we have a we may have a tendency when we read something like this and think tut tut Lot what a what an unspiritual man.

And I think if we think that way we really are missing the testimony of scripture and we're missing the point. Lot because actually Lot was a very strong man morally and ethically he had spiritual strength he really did.

There's no doubt about it the New Testament says that righteous man Lot how he hated what went on in Sodom and you know if I could be like Lot in the things that he did in Sodom wow I would be pleased with myself.

[18 : 16] Do you know what Lot did in Sodom? He stood alone everyone spoke against him. We read about it later on they said ah this one came in and he's acting as a judge because what was Lot doing?

He kept telling them the way you're living is wrong if you want your if you want your city to survive if you want to please God you must change this is wrong.

Do you have the boldness to say that to the people at your work or do you have the boldness to say it to the people in your family? Do you have the boldness to say it to other Christians that you know are going astray?

Most most people most Christians will shrink back from that kind of strength which is loving if we do it the right way it's a very loving thing to do but Lot had that strength what a man and Lot was really we're not meant to think about him in any other way he resisted for so long even to the very end he was standing in the gate when angels came to destroy the city but he was drawn into worldliness his family was drawn into it his servants were drawn into it his wife seems to have been drawn into it his daughters were drawn into it he might have been strong but what about the people around him maybe you're here this evening and you are a strong person you will stand and you will be able to say great things for the Lord and do great things for the Lord in the midst of worldliness maybe God's given you that strength and it's your gift but it's not something that we should or that you should test unnecessarily don't go into these situations because where you might be able to stand your brother might not be able to stand and he's going to follow your example your family might not be able to stand and they're going to take their lead from you do you know how easily we are drawn into worldliness we read about

Solomon in the Old Testament in the book of Nehemiah you know how Solomon was he asked for wisdom from the Lord when he could have had anything but he wanted wisdom to rule this great country and what a king and what a kingdom and what a spiritual man yet afterwards Nehemiah says to the people that returned from exile and they're marrying foreign women and he says to them among the many nations there was no king like Solomon he was beloved of God God made him king over all Israel nevertheless foreign women made even him to sin what's the lesson are we meant to say Solomon he was spiritually weak we're missing the point

[21 : 47] Solomon was spiritually strong but he put himself in situations where he couldn't stand he was drawn into worldliness sometimes the Lord puts us in these situations and we have to stand he tests us in it but we mustn't seek it we mustn't think that we stand lest we fall well we learn that lesson from this chapter how easily we're drawn into worldliness well thirdly and finally and you might have said yes this has been a very gloomy sermon this evening well let me change the tone a little bit because there's something wonderful about this chapter these things are solemn warnings but we learn a lesson here about the salvation of our

God it's wonderful we learn about the willingness of our God to save and to preserve his people even to give sinners another chance he's so patient he's so kind our God we learn about the salvation of our God and we learn about this through Abram's actions and through the outcome we read in verse 13 that one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite and when Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive he led forth his trained men born in his house 318 that's a lot of servants but it's not that many people considering he was going to fight against four mighty kings who had just swept all the nations before him before them he had his 318 men yes he had his friends

Aner and Eshcol and he divided his forces by knight he and his servants and they defeated those kings and they pursued them to Hobah north of Damascus and they liberated everyone and they brought back all the stuff and they brought back Lot and they brought back all the people Abram did it I do think it's amazing if this indeed was the first war like this in human history it's amazing to think Abram was in the midst of it Abram was the victor and he didn't do it by his own strength he did it by

God's strength and he gives in it an example of the salvation of our God Abram's attitude he's told Lot's been taken captive Sodom has been defeated what would you say when you when you've had a

Christian colleague a Christian brother and they've gone the wrong way they've chosen a path that you wouldn't have recommended to them and then it all goes wrong for them what are you going to say are you going to say told you so are you going to say well it serves them right they made their bed let them lie in it or something like that you know we can be like that even as Christians sometimes we're too quick to delight in the downfall of somebody else who maybe disagreed with us maybe had a slightly different theology slightly different but Abram's attitude was nothing like that he could have said well look we've separated he chose his path I chose my path he chose unwisely I chose him God what can I expect for Lot but he didn't he had no desire to punish

Lot he had no desire to leave him to the full consequences of his actions he didn't wish him harm and more than that he willed good for Lot he wanted him restored and his possessions and Abram risked his life for Lot humanly speaking Abram wasn't going to win that battle but it was the right thing to do he was not going to let his brother fall and so he went after him and he saved him tells us something about Abram but it tells us something about Abram's God because God used Abram to save Lot God saved Lot God reached out to him and when everything had gone wrong and his world had collapsed and he could look back and say I haven't been wise

[27 : 16] God held out his hand to him and brought him back to safety and gave him that chance again for a new beginning how do you feel as you come to the end of a year we're at the end of a year and you look back we can talk about worldliness we can talk about the insecurity of the world and we can look at our lives and we can say yes I've fallen in that aspect yes I've made a mess of things yes I shouldn't have done that what can I do now and I wonder if you ever think to yourself well I've done it now I've made my bed and I have to lie in it I can't I can't ask God to help me do you ever think like that it's not the right way to think it's not the right view of our

God and sometimes we think about him like that we think about him as if well no he's going to you know he's going to punish me I deserve to be punished and he has to punish me and I have to just take my punishment that's the way he's going to treat me well sometimes we are chastised there's no question about it but even in our chastisement the Lord is always saying return to me I love you my desire for you is good I will restore the years the I will give you the trust in the Lord there's hope there's opportunity it's all ahead of you he who comes to God we're told in Hebrews believes that he is God exists and he's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him that's part of our understanding of our

God we don't return to him for punishment he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him we come to God and we come to him because we know that he rewards those who come that's the character that's the nature of our God and we find that at the end of this chapter it was all a warning for the people of Sodom it was all warning for Lot and they don't seem to have learned their lesson too early the next time when trouble came Lot was not preserved sorry Sodom was not preserved but Lot was because the Lord knows how to preserve the righteous but you wouldn't dabble with it thinking you might just be saved by the skin of your teeth what are you to do as you go into a new year what are you to do all previous years of your life have been a waste welcome to the God who saves we learn a great lesson about the salvation of our God he restored

Lot and he restored everything that he had what a God what a salvation and in the gospel we know far more than he gives an inheritance eternal life an inheritance co-heirs with Christ things that the Old Testament said eye has not seen ear has not heard neither has entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for his people and yet in the news we're told but these things have now been made known what a God what a salvation perhaps a gloomy passage and perhaps I've dabbled in a little bit of the gloominess of it but what a powerful message about salvation well may the Lord give us understanding of these things and cause us to have confidence to draw near to him and to be saved well let us sing