

Lot, the grace of God in a life of compromises

Genesis 19

In Matthew 6, the Lord Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters, because either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the first and despise the second. You cannot serve God and Money at the same time." No one can serve two masters. And if Jesus said that, it was because he knew it was a real temptation. He knew that among those who call themselves Christian, there would always be those who will try to serve two masters. And for the Christian, there is always this tension: How to live in the world without being seduced by the world? How to live, work, play in the world without being attracted to it? How to serve a single master? How to reject the idols of the world, idols that constantly cry out: serve me? How can we remain faithful to God?

It was always a problem for the people of God in the Old Testament. These people, called to be holy, called to serve the one true God, they were often seduced by false gods. They often moved away from God. And in the New Testament we see many exhortations given to Christians: The Christian is called to be salt and light in the world, to be an influence in the world for good. However, there is a real danger for the Christian. We are in the world but we must be careful not to let the world influence us, not to become like the world, not to adopt the values of the world, not to pursue the treasures of the world, the idols of the world. Paul writes in Galatians 6 of a world dominated by evil. In Ephesians 2 he talks about those who conform their way of life to that of the world. In Titus chapter 2 we read that "the grace of God leads us to reject the passions of the people of this world" The apostle James says in James 2.12: "Pure and undefiled religion, before God our Father, consists in visiting the orphans and widows in their afflictions, and not to let themselves be corrupted by this world ". We read in 1 John 2: "Do not love the world or anything that is part of this world." And then in the last book of the Bible, Jesus writes to a church corrupted by the world and tells it that he wants to vomit it out of his mouth. The message is clear: No one can serve two masters. And yet, is that not what we try to do? We all are influenced by the world. It seduces us on several fronts. We adopt its values and bow down to its idols. Our lives are corrupted by the world.

And in our text this morning, we see a man corrupted by the world. We see a man who tries to serve two masters, a life full of compromise. I'd like to take a look at Lot's life to see what it's like to be a man trying to serve two masters. It would be easier to preach this morning if I could say that Lot was not a believer, that he was not a man of God. But this is not the case. The apostle Peter in his second epistle describes Lot as "a righteous man." Lot is already in heaven. He is saved, but as if through the fire. Lot is not described here as a good model to follow but rather a bad model to avoid.

A man who seems to want to walk with God

Not all about Lot's life is a disaster. There are some things which are encouraging. The first thing that encourages us is the welcome given by Lot to the angels. We have no reason to believe that Lot knew they were angels. But he is the one who warmly welcomes them. By doing this, he shows that he is different from the people of Sodom. He invites them to spend the night at his home. When the angels refuse, Lot insists, V4. Lot knows the city of Sodom and he knows that these foreigners will not be safe if they spend the night outside in Sodom.

One could be encouraged by the fact that Lot has a position of influence in the city. He sits at the city gate, the place where city leaders meet to deliberate together. Lot was known in the city. Maybe his desire was to be salt and light in the darkness, to have a positive influence in the city. In general, it is a good thing when Christians get involved in society to be a positive influence.

Another thing that is positive in his life is seen in verse 7 when the men of Sodom seek to rape his two guests. Lot is scandalized by this request: "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly." He is appalled by the evil around him. The apostle Peter speaks of Lot in 2 Peter 2 "greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard)"

When the angels tell Lot that he must warn his family of the danger, he does so. He puts his life in danger when he goes out to speak with his sons-in-law about the impending judgment v14 "Get up, go out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city"

And look at the first part of verse 19. Here is a man who is aware of the grace of God in his life:

"Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life."

He recognizes the benevolence and grace of God.

All of these things in Lot's life are positive. All these things seem to tell us that he is a pious man, a just man. But when you start to dig a little, you see a man who compromises enormously with the world

around him. We see a man who seeks to serve two masters, a man who is seduced by the world. We see a man who is both disgusted by the world but also attracted to the world.

A man who makes bad choices

We see Lot for the first time in chapter 11. He leaves Ur with Abram and Abram's father to go to the land of Canaan. Abram must have convinced him to accompany him on his journey of obedience to the voice of God. He would have been present when Abram built his altars to worship God. He would have seen in Abram a model of faith and obedience. But in chapter 13 we see a first step in his moving away from God. There is an argument over land and Lot chooses to move away from Abraham, to move away from the man of God. His choice of land is governed by material gain. He moves away from Abraham and approaches Sodom. 13.12 tells us: "He pitched his tents in the direction of Sodom." He settled near Sodom despite the fact that, v13 "The people of Sodom were very evil and sinful to the Lord." It's the first step in his being seduced by the world. In chapter 14 we read that Lot no longer lives "close to Sodom", but actually right in the city of Sodom. Because of this choice to live in Sodom, Lot is taken hostage in chapter 14. Abraham comes to his aid, and there, Lot has the opportunity to leave his life in Sodom. He has the opportunity to repent and return to Abraham. But he misses the opportunity and he settles again in Sodom. And years later, he is still in Sodom, forced to flee to escape the judgment of God. It all started with his bad choices, choices where his priority was not to seek God, not to approach God. His choices took him away from God. His choices revealed that he wanted to try to serve two masters. And for us, we all have choices to make. What should be our main concern in our choices? Will my choice move me away from or nearer to God? It can be a simple choice: How to spend a free evening. I have a choice. My choice, will it move me away from God, will it put a stumbling block in front of me or will it help me to draw near to God, to advance in holiness. And in the most important choices, marriage or work for example, our choices will have far-reaching consequences not only for ourselves but for our loved ones. A bad choice can take us very far from God. A good choice will keep us close to God and allow us to enjoy a richer relationship with Him. Lot is a man who makes bad choices.

A man who ends up looking like the world

If verse 7 encourages us when Lot refuses to send his hosts out to the mob, verse 8 leaves us speechless. The man who is disgusted by what Sodom's men want to do, he offers to send his daughters out into the hands of the cruel and vicious crowd. What Lot says in verse 8 gives us a shiver in the back: "I have two daughters who have not known a man, I will bring them out to you, and you will do to them what you please" He is ready to throw his own daughters out, like a piece of meat to wolves. He is not asking God to intervene to save. He capitulates immediately. Can you imagine what would have happened to them? How many men were there? They were like wild animals. And Lot is ready to push his daughters out and close the door behind them. It's amazing what this righteous man is prepared to do here. On the one hand, he hates what's going on in his city. On the other hand, he acts just like them. After years at Sodom, he ends up behaving like everyone else. And nothing has changed since. Those who call themselves Christian, they wring their hands in despair in a world where lies are everywhere and then they lie in their tax returns. They deplore the violence and sexual immorality of society and then spend their evenings watching exactly the same thing on TV. They are shocked by what they see in the world around them but they don't even see it in their own lives. When we compromise with the world, we end up looking like the world.

A man who has no more impact on God in the world

In verse 9 we see exactly what the people of Sodom think of Lot. We see the true extent of his influence. In verse 7 Lot calls them "my brothers" but look at verse 9 to see what "his brothers" think of him: "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them."

Lot probably thinks he can reason with "his brothers"! But look at the violence of their hatred and their opposition to Lot when he dares to oppose their evil. Even when God blinds them in verse 11, they persevere in their determination to do evil. Here's what happens when you try to be friends with the world. Here is what happens when you try to keep one foot in the Kingdom of God and one foot in the world. We no longer have an impact on God. We lack credibility.

A life full of compromise destroys our Christian witness. Look at the reaction of Lot's sons-in-law when he warns them of the judgment in v14: "But in the eyes of his sons-in-law, he seemed to be joking."

They think it's a joke. They look at their stepfather and they burst out laughing! In the eyes of his sons-in-law, Lot totally lacks credibility. His testimony is no longer serious. What these sons-in-law hear and what they see in his life is not at all the same thing.

For us, the challenge is clear: Do our words and our life announce the same message? We say to the world: Jesus is Lord! But can the world see Jesus on the throne of your life? Does the world see a life consecrated to King Jesus?

And this passage shows us that it is especially at home, within our family that the inconsistency will be seen. In this passage we see Lot's family: his wife, daughters and sons-in-law. Look at the impact of Lot's testimony. His wife: One can imagine that Lot had met her at Sodom but there is nothing in this text to tell us that she has approached God during the years spent with Lot. She sees nothing in Lot's life to convince her of her need for God. So when it comes to leaving Sodom, she can't do it. She cannot part with her life in Sodom and she perishes. We have already seen Lot's sons-in-law. They laugh at their stepfather and they too perish. And then the daughters of Lot. It's true, they listen to their father and escape the judgment of God but watch what they do next! They sleep with their father after getting him drunk, in order to get pregnant by their father. Like their father, they have no moral scruples. They do what needs to be done even if it means sleeping with their father.

And yes, we must say that the members of Lot's family, they make their own choices. If they refuse to believe, to repent, it is their choice. But it must also be said that they saw nothing in Lot's life to show them a better way. And although the choice of our children and those close to us is their choice, we have this responsibility to be a model, to show them in our lives that God is good, that God is worthy of our praise, of our worship. They need to see in us a life consecrated to Jesus. It's the best thing we can do for our children and loved ones. Parents, what do your children need? They need to see Jesus in you. They need to see authentic faith, a living relationship with God. They need to see that Jesus reigns in your house.

I will never forget a conversation I had with a young woman who was talking about her parents. She said: My parents told us that it was important to attend church, but if as a family we had to choose between church and a weekend by the sea, we saw that it was not that important. And during the holidays, we never set foot in a church. We heard what they said but we also saw their choices. They sent us to Sunday school because they said it was important to learn the stories from the Bible. But with us, most of the time, mom and dad were too busy or too tired to read the Bible and pray with us. They often told us not to give our heart to just anyone, but they never told us to give our heart to Jesus. They told us to study well in school and college, but they never told us to study the Bible. We saw right through the façade.

Lot is a man who no longer has any impact for God.

A man who chooses not to repent.

When I read this story, it makes me think of the story of the prodigal son but with a much sadder outcome. I see Abraham as the father. In verse 27 he gets up to see what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah. He is probably thinking of his nephew Lot. Did he escape? Can I dare to hope that he will return home? And then Uncle Abraham spots a figure in the distance. It's Lot. It's Lot returning from the far country. It's Lot who has come to his senses. He is ready to humble himself. He returns to ask for forgiveness. He wants to repent and start afresh, a new life, far from Sodom, a new life, consecrated to God. I really want the story to end like this. But that's not what happens. Lot ends his days in fear in a dark cave. What a missed opportunity. In chapter 14, after being released by Abraham, he could have repented. Following the destruction of Sodom, he could have repented. When he decides to leave Tsoar, he could have repented. But he persists in his life far from God. Is he too proud? Does he not want to lose face? Is he just too hardened in his attachment to the world? "I've been away from God for too long. I've been away from God's people for too long. It's too late to return. If I go back now, I will be judged. They will condemn me."

And maybe I'm talking to someone who's a bit like Lot. You look at your life, and if you are honest you have to say that your life is a life of compromise. You are trying to serve two masters. And little by little in your life, you have moved away from God, from the people of God. You are not in a good place spiritually. Yes, you are not like the people of Sodom, but Sodom has seduced you. There are still the vestiges of a relationship with God but your choices keep you away from God. And the question for you is this: What are you going to do? Will you recognize your need for forgiveness, for grace? Will you repent and come back to God? Or are you going to end your days in a dark cave, far from God, far from his people because it is too difficult to repent and return to God? God in his grace gives Lot

many opportunities to return. But Lot refuses. And Lot ends his days in misery, no doubt with a lot of regret. God is putting before you this morning an opportunity to repent and return. Come back! Come back to God.

This chapter is one of the saddest chapters in the Bible. Few Christians would say this is their favorite chapter. Yet in the midst of the horror of sin and judgment, there is grace. There is grace in verse 21. God gives grace to the city of Zoar out of respect for Lot, a just man. Is this not a response to Abraham's prayer in chapter 18? This is what verse 29 says: "when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow" The judge of all the earth has indeed done right! And then there's more grace for Lot. This chapter 19 is the last time we hear about him. We no longer know anything about his life or his death. But we do know that he has two sons, two sons born to the daughters of Lot. And even the names given to the two boys are a constant reminder of the sin of Lot and his daughters. Moab means "from the father" and Ben-Ammi means "son of my kinsman". And we'll see the Moabites and the Ammonites over and over again in the history of God's people, often as enemies of the people. But in the midst of this sad story, God is at work to show grace. And generations later, we will see a young Moabite woman, a descendant of Lot, a young girl called Ruth. And Ruth will marry a certain Boaz, from Bethlehem. And they will have a son Obed who will have a son Jesse son who will have a son David. And generations later there will be a son named Jesus from the same family. In the midst of sin, disobedience and failure, God is at work. God shows grace.