
HE HESITATED

Genesis 19:16

EZEKIEL, OGHENEKARO

16 When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them.

Genesis 19:16 (NIV)

The Reality

Lot Was In the Wrong Place

While Lot was a young man, he came into Canaan with his uncle Abraham, and God blessed them both. Finally, their herds increased to the extent that it was impossible for their cattle to graze in the same area. We read in **Genesis 13** that strife arose “between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock” (v. 7). Alarmed, Abraham said to his nephew: *Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me: if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left* (vv. 8, 9).

Everything that Lot owned had come directly or indirectly through his uncle. He should have said, “No, you should have first choice.” Instead, we read:

... Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere ... like the garden of the Lord, ... So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan; ... Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley (vv. 10– 12a).

We then have this chilling phrase: “... and [Lot] moved his tents as far as Sodom” (v. 12b). (The KJV has “pitched his tent toward Sodom.”) The expression is chilling because “the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord” (v. 13). **Genesis 14** tells of kings who warred against the rulers of Sodom and Gomorrah. “And they . . . took Lot, Abram’s nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom”. Lot first “moved his tents” toward Sodom, and then “he was living in Sodom.” *Your direction determines your destination.*

Warned by God

God endured the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah for a while, but

then His patience ran out and He determined to destroy the cities. First, however, He sent two angels to warn Lot and his family. The messengers told Lot, *“We are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the Lord that the Lord has sent us to destroy it”* (19:13).

Lot Hesitated

Next, we find these strange words: *“But he hesitated”* (v. 16a). (The KJV has *“he lingered.”*) Lot did not intend to be destroyed, but still *“he hesitated”*; he lingered inside the city!

Today

We read about Lot’s hesitation with surprise. Perhaps we say, *“If the angels had warned me, I would have left at once!”* Are you sure? Stop a moment to think, and you will realize that Lot has his modern counterpart.

In the Wrong Place

Today, like Lot, many of us are in the wrong place. For years, we have inched our way toward Sodom: the Sodom of worldliness and sin, the Sodom of manmade religious institutions, the Sodom of spiritual disinterest, or other Sodom’s that oppose the will of God. Having *“pitched our tents”* in that direction, it is not surprising that some of us now reside there.

Warned by God

I remember the warning through the sermon of last week about not participating in evangelism. God has

sent His messengers to warn us of the danger, even as He sent messengers to Lot: We have Bibles in our homes. We have heard sermon after sermon. Some of us have Christian parents or friends who have tried to point us in the right direction. We know what is right, what we should do and be! God’s message to us is basically the same as for Lot: *“If you are not where you should be spiritually, flee My wrath!”*

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, . . . (2 Corinthians 5:11). And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? (1 Peter 4:18), Hebrews 10:31.

We Hesitate

God’s words of warning are not difficult to understand, and most of us would insist that we believe them—but for some reason, like Lot, we hesitate: We plan to stop sinning someday. We will become Christians someday. We will stop coming late someday. We will stop this and that someday. We will be restored as erring Christians someday. We will become faithful to the Lord someday. Like Lot of long ago, we do not intend to be lost—but still we linger in our sin.

THE REASONS FOR HESITATION

Why did Lot hesitate? We cannot know his thoughts, but we can make some educated guesses—especially as we look at our own reasons for lingering.

Hard To Believe

Lot probably had to struggle intellectually with the angel's warning. Put yourself in Lot's place: As he walked down the street, everything was as it had always been. He was surrounded by the hustle and bustle of the city. The street was filled with colourful crowds who had come to trade. Behind him was the house in which he had lived for years: the house in which his children had been born, the house in which his children had grown up. Along the street were shops of the merchants with whom he had done business for years. Many of those he met greeted him with a wave and a smile. How hard it would have been to believe that in a matter of hours, perhaps even minutes, all of this would be gone! There was no precedent for such a thing; it was outside of Lot's experience. Whether or not he believed it, God's warning was true. The two cities were so completely demolished that today we are not exactly sure where they were located.

Likewise, most of us today can understand the wording of God's warnings. Whether or not it is hard to believe, if God says it, it is true! **2 Peter 3:10-12.**

Ties

Perhaps the principal reason Lot hesitated was that he had ties to the city. Not only had he moved into Sodom, but to some extent he had probably allowed Sodom to move into him. No doubt he had friends there, and his wife had friends there. He had

business acquaintances. His daughters had married men from Sodom and Gomorrah. If he had grandchildren, they were probably born there. Ties can also cause us to hesitate to do what we know we should do. Some of us have ties with the world: activities we do not want to give up, or "friends" who might make fun of us if we commit our lives to the Lord. For others, family ties are a primary hindrance: our mates, our parents, our grandparents, even our children. **Matthew 10:34-37.** To be part of God's chosen people, Ruth had to leave her kinsmen and her religion (**Ruth 1:16, 17**);

Plenty of Time

It is also possible that Lot did not realize the urgency of the warning; he may have thought that it would be some time before God's wrath rained down upon the cities. Certainly, many today think that they have plenty of time to make a firm decision about the Lord. Some find consolation in Jesus' parable that mentions "eleventh-hour" workers who received the same reward as those who worked all day (**Matthew 20:9**). They plan to wait until the last minute to commit their lives to the Lord. Let us consider two facts about these individuals.

First, their situation is not the same as that of the eleventh-hour workers. The eleventh-hour workers started working as soon as they were invited (**Matthew 20:6, 7**), while these have rejected the gospel invitation time and time again.

Second, no one has a guarantee that he will live until the eleventh hour. *“Many who plan to go in at the eleventh hour die at 10:30.”*

THE RESULTS OF HESITATION

He Had No Peace of Mind

As long as Lot hesitated, he had no peace of mind. This statement includes all the time that Lot lived in Sodom: all the years that he hesitated to leave those familiar, but ungodly, surroundings. After Peter wrote of the destruction of the wicked cities (**2 Peter 2:6**), he spoke of how life in those cities had affected Lot: The apostle said that Lot was *“oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds)”* (**2 Peter 2:7, 8**). *Isaiah 48:22 Philippians 4:7a.*

He Robbed God of His Best Years

Lot also robbed God of the best years of his life—years that could have been spent in useful service to Him, but years that were lost (as we shall see) because of his environment. When we spend our days away from God, we destroy ourselves. We speak of “killing time,” but time lived away from the Lord is a case of time killing us. The greatest sins of the Prodigal Son (**Luke 15**) were his failure to appreciate the blessings to be found in his father’s house and his lack of desire to be with his father. When he went into the far country, he squandered more than money: He

wasted time he could have spent with his father.

He Lost His Family

To me, it seems that the most tragic result of Lot’s hesitation is that he lost his family. It is possible that if Lot had converted his family, Sodom and Gomorrah would not have been destroyed. God had said that if ten righteous souls were found in the cities, He would spare them (**Genesis 18:32**). Let us count the souls mentioned in **Genesis 19**. Lot is one, and his wife (v. 15) makes two. Lot had two unmarried daughters (vv. 8, 15); they make three and four. The messengers asked about his sons (v. 12); if he had at least two, they would be five and six. Lot may have had at least two married daughters (v. 14), who would make seven and eight. At least two sons-in-law (v. 14) would bring the total to ten.

One of the saddest passages in our text is this: *“And Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, . . . and said, ‘Up, get out of this place, for the Lord will destroy the city.’ But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting”* (v. 14:). If Lot had ever had credibility with his sons-in-law, he had lost it. As far as they were considered, he was just a dithering old man, out of touch with reality. They did not take him seriously.

Moms and Dads, if your children are still at home, let me urge you to do whatever it takes to put the Lord and His way first in your lives (**Matthew 6:33**)—and to teach your children to do the same. You may think that you

have no choice, that you must live in the Sodom of materialism and secularism in order to make a living, in order to survive. Maybe you are even counting the days until you can leave Sodom. Perhaps eventually you will get out—but have you considered the possibility that if you wait much longer, your children may not come with you?

King David moved into the Sodom of sin, and his son Absalom followed. David came out, but Absalom stayed. Later, David cried, *“O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!”* (2 **Samuel 18:33b**). I pray that you never have to look into the face of a child who has died without hope and cry to yourself, *“O my son (or my daughter), I could have won you for the Lord if I had not hesitated!”*

CONCLUSION

Lot was basically a good person. Moses spoke of his hospitality (**Genesis 19:1–11**). Peter called him *“righteous.”* Nevertheless, Lot made a fatal mistake when he stayed too long where he should not have been in the first place.

Today, if you find yourself in Sodom, I beg you to get out before it is too late. Time is too short and uncertain for you to hesitate. If you had a life-threatening illness, I hope that you would not hesitate to do something about it. If you had to make a pressing decision to save your business, I do not think you would hesitate. Why would you hesitate to save your soul, your most precious possession? If you persist in your hesitation, it can be too late before you realize it. The writer of Hebrews, referring to some, said that it was *“impossible to renew them again to repentance”* (**Hebrews 6:6**). He begged his readers, *“Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts”* (3:7, 8a).

Reference

David Roper – Sermons I Like to Preach – He Hesitated, 1997, 1998 (Truth for Today) – www.biblecourses.com