

Compromised Faith

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Date: 10 September 2023

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[0 : 0 0] It's great to be here with you guys today. This is a very intense passage, so why don't we pray for God's help as we look at his word. Lord, speak to us through your word and change our hearts. Amen.

Friends, I think it goes without saying that this passage is gross. We find a man in an absolute quagmire of sin. There's the consequences of his own errors, but there's also the consequences of others' sin. It's a messy family. Now, this passage might seem very far removed from us, since we will all find this revolting. But I think this passage, this extreme passage, highlights something that we all feel. It's the mess of sinful lives. It's the muck our own sin creates, both the guilt and the consequences of it. The chaos that others' sin causes in our lives, being hurt by it, or the stress of living among a messy people, or the painful mess of the curse of sin, disaster, sickness, death, and more. Life can be a bit messy in this sinful world, can't it?

But this passage is a warning. A story which, by disgust, should drive us from chasing after the world and after sin. But remember last week, Lot is a righteous man. We saw that he was saved from Sodom.

And because of that event, Peter says in the New Testament, in 2 Peter 2, that Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked, for as that righteous man lived among them day by day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard.

Lot was righteous. He trusted in God. But he chased after worldly things. He had worldly ambitions.

[2 : 1 0] He had a compromised faith. Who among us doesn't have a compromised faith like that? I suspect we all feel the messiness of life after the fall. And so this passage is a warning that we really need to hear. But it is also a great hope. Listen out for that hope as we dig in.

Now this passage is a tale of two daughters and a tale of two points. You'll notice that there's double ups or repeats of almost every line in the passage. These double ups help us see the structure of the passage. See how verse 30 repeats itself. The first verse gives us our first section.

The second section is the two nights. And you can see that these two nights of two daughters in 21 to 35 are almost word-for-word retellings of the same events over the two nights. And the final repeat is in verse 36 to 38. A section about two mothers of two nations. And the point of the story is sort of doubled like this. It both warns us and is a great comfort, but we'll get to that. It's a cautionary tale and a hope for people with compromised faith like us. But as we dig in, you can see in verse 30, there's the problem facing Lot. Look at what it says in verse 30.

Now Lot went up out of Zoar and lived in the hills with his two daughters. For he was afraid to live in Zoar. So he lived in a cave with his two daughters. It raises the question, will Lot die here?

Will his line end here? He has very little left. His wife, his sons-in-laws, and his wealth were all destroyed back in Sodom. He only has his two daughters. Now notice Genesis is sort of paralleling Lot and Noah in our passage. Out of a massive destruction, a righteous man and his family are being delivered. But in our case, unlike Noah, the sons are swept up in the destruction, which means no sons, no offspring to carry on his line. His family is in a state of death. He doesn't have wealth or heirs. And Lot seems cursed and his line is about to perish. And so, as verse 30 says, Lot is living in the hills because he was afraid to live in Zoar. Do you see that? Now that's an interesting verse since just before our passage in verse 19, Lot pleads not to go into the mountains, but asks for a concession to live in Zoar. But now because of fear, this cave is going to be his tomb.

[4 : 59] It seems Lot is going to die. So is this Lot's Lot? But this should be ringing alarm bells. Is God a liar? Now it might surprise us, but God made promises back in chapter 12 to Abraham that concern people like Lot. There's more at stake in this passage than meets the eye. Flip with me briefly to chapter 12. We're going to look at Genesis chapter 12, just a few verses, starting in verse 2.

Verse 2 says, And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great. This is to Abraham, remember, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Did you see that?

Those who bless you will be blessed. And so after God makes this promise to Abraham, look down with me, or Abram at this time, to verse 4. So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abraham's nephew is side by side with Abram. Lot is kind of our first case study of those who bless Abraham and whether they will be blessed in return. He's Abram's own family, he's there from the beginning. If Lot isn't blessed, is there any hope for the rest of us in Abraham's promises for the world to be blessed through him? But remember, in our passage, Lot looks cursed. But as we move through Genesis, you do see Lot benefit from this blessing to Abraham.

Lot becomes incredibly wealthy with his uncle, because God blesses Lot, because he trusts in the promises to Abraham. But remember, a few weeks back, Dave made the point that they separate, and that separation removes Lot from being the inheritor of the promises. And this makes space for Isaac to be the one that inherits the promise. But that doesn't mean that Lot has failed to bless Abram. It's actually quite the opposite. He obeys and separates, as Abraham requests. And several times after that, Abram rescues Lot. That shows that they clearly still have a good relationship. Lot is still being blessed. So Lot is still there in our passage, blessing Abraham. Surely he should be blessed, as per God's promise to Abram. But the problem with Lot, which is clear to see as they separate, is that he has defective vision. He sees by sight and not by faith. He sees and looks at the worldly things and the value of them instead of trusting in God's provision. His faith is compromised.

Abraham, on the other side, is trusting in God's provision, seeing by faith. Zoar, when we see the separation, is said to look like the garden of the Lord. Lot sees the outward greatness of this place and chases after it. But the catch is that Zoar is said to be filled with wickedness. And that's the opposite of the garden of the Lord. And in our passage, we see the consequences of Lot's seeing by sight. But before we get too far, remember that Lot is righteous. 2 Peter says so. Because like Abraham, he's trusting in the promises made to Abram.

[8 : 35] His faith is counted to him as righteousness. That's what we mean when we say the word faith, or the words faith righteousness. It's not that Lot is totally moral. The story so far has removed any possibility that both Abram or Lot are totally innocent. They've both made mistakes, especially Lot. But remember, Abram believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. And Lot is righteous because he's also trusting in these promises. He isn't the one that the promises are made to, but he is responding by faith to God's promises to Abraham. Lot is in the kingdom because of faith.

And we will see that that really is good news for us also. But we'll get there soon. He has, though, a compromised faith. And last week, we saw that he still, even in the destruction of Sodom, wants to cling to the world. If you read over chapter 19 later, notice that he didn't want to go into the hills, but he wanted to stay in Zohar, to see by sight still, and not by faith. He still wants to live in the world among Zohar, not in the hills. But when we come to our passage, Lot has gone up into a cave to die, seemingly cursed, having fathered no sons. In Genesis, a book all about origin stories, having no generations, is being in a state of death. And we see that in the next chapter with Abimelech, for example. He's kept from having children because he takes Sarah unknowingly.

And so God says to him in verse 20, you're a dead man. So it seems Lot's origin story dies here. His cave is his tomb because he's afraid of living in Zohar. This is the consequences of chasing after worldly things. But has his defective vision brought curse? And that's the end. Has it cut him off from the promises of Abraham? Only earlier in the chapter we saw him as righteous, but Lot's life of faith has been messy, hasn't it? He's made some big stuff-ups.

His faith is compromised. The question of this passage is, what is the conclusion for people in the mess of sin? Is there grace for compromised people like Lot, like us?

Well, in our next section, in verse 31 to 35, we see the nature of Lot's mistakes and their consequences. They've come back to bite him, and it should be a warning to us. Look at verses 31 and 32.

[11 : 18] It says, And the firstborn said to the younger, our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come into us after the manner of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him that we may preserve offspring from our father. The older daughter gets it, doesn't she?

It's the end of the line for this family's origin story. No more generations. Their fiancées have died, and they have no one to marry them. And that's what I think they mean when they say that there's not a man on earth to come into us. There's no one to marry them.

See, their desire is to preserve the offspring of their father. They want to take the death of their family and bring life. That's a seemingly good desire. Unless you read the line before it, come, let us make our father drink wine, and we shall lie with him. Their plan is to make their father drink and sleep with him. This is utterly wicked. This kind of sexual ethic is disgusting, but in verse 33, the plan goes off without a hitch, such that the very next day they repeat the same thing. The older daughter says in the next verse, verse 33, so they made their father drink wine that night. Oh, sorry, verse 32, come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him that we may preserve offspring from our father. Oh, my bad. Verse 34 is what I meant to say.

The next day the firstborn said to the younger, behold, I lay last night with my father. Let us make him drink wine tonight also. Then you go in and lie with him that we may preserve offspring from our father. If you thought once was revolting enough, they do it again, and they think it's such a good idea, it worked well, let's go. And so they disgrace their family again. What is wrong with these women? Why are they so messed up? Well, surely this is not the right answer and not what they're supposed to do. I'm not sure what they were supposed to do for this situation. Maybe there are other options, but regardless, this is what the story says.

But notice that it says twice that he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. This phrase absolves Lot of a fair bit of guilt for this wicked and deplorable sexual act.

[13 : 59] But remember, 2 Peter 2 says that Lot was distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked. Lot is not okay with this kind of stuff. He's not okay with this kind of wicked act. He hated lawless deeds of Sodom. And I suspect that even those in Sodom would have hated this. But he isn't totally innocent either. He seems so effortlessly be made to be drunk to blackoutness. It's reminiscent of Noah, whose children sin against him as well. But in Lot's case, it's far worse, isn't it?

And it's Lot's fault that this situation has come, because he saw by sight and not by faith. He cared too much for worldly ambition. And this is the consequence of his own sin. Just like in Noah, we expected them to flee Sodom and live happily ever after, delivered from the sinful people that they dwelt amongst. But neither in Noah's day nor in Lot's did this happen. Sin perseveres, and it's only a partial salvation. Because the sin of the people has continued in the hearts of those who were saved. Here in Lot and his drunkenness, like in Noah, but further, Sodom lives on in the hearts of Lot's daughters. See, be warned, brothers and sisters. If we chase after the world, the world will infest our hearts.

And that's especially true of Lot's daughters. See, Lot's faulty sight has affected his children even more so. Lot has been a bad father. It's his responsibility to find husbands for his daughters.

And I think that is also underpinning the comment in verse 31, that there's not a man on earth to come into us after all the men of the earth. Lot should have found a husband for his daughters. And he should have protected his daughters from the wickedness of the city. But now, his daughters are more daughters of Sodom than they are of Lot. Sodom is in their hearts, and their sexual ethic has been warped by the city which they lived in. And so here, Lot's obsession with sight. Seeing the worldly wonders of the valley of Sodom have come back to bite him as his daughters are infected with Sodom in their hearts. And they sin against their drunken father, it's a repeat of Noah, isn't it? Sin has persevered through the righteous one that God delivered. The messiness of sin is seemingly inescapable. Brothers and sisters, this passage is a cautionary tale for us. Run from the world. Don't let worldly ambition infect your heart or those who you're responsible for.

See, Jesus says in Matthew 11 that if the works that were done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, that they would have remained to this day. The gospel of the Lord Jesus has come, and our world rejected that Lord, the Lord of all. Where we are in many ways is far worse, far more evil than Sodom.

[17:16] And it's easy to look down on these women and distance ourselves from them. And in many ways, we should. It's disgusting. We don't want to associate or think too closely of ourselves to them.

But on the other hand, I think we do have more in common with these daughters than we might initially think. See, if you, like me, have grown up influenced by the sexual revolution and our culture that's developed from that, your attitude towards sex has been warped. Maybe like me, when you hear the various arguments of sexual movements that have developed over the last century, to some degree they seem persuasive to us. Because we've been infected by sin and the lies of the devil.

I suspect in almost all of us in this room, we feel this way. And sex is just one aspect. Remember, Lot didn't go to Sodom because of its sexual ethic, but because he went for his worldly ambition. And brothers and sisters, that's a huge issue for us as Christians in St. Lucia.

We're in a very affluent place, and the world is at our fingertips. Wealth and business are a huge danger for us. Are we seeing by sight or by faith? Let's ask ourselves, why do we work where we work?

Why do we send our kids to the schools that we send our kids to? Let's ask ourselves seriously. Let's take the caution of this passage, and let's think carefully and take a vision test.

[18:51] Are we looking at the world in front of us, or the world to come, the kingdom of God? It's far better to work this out now than later say the faith equivalent of should have gone to spec savers. Because our defective vision, a defective vision won't just affect us, will it?

That's the problem with the messiness of sin, with compromised faith. Lot's daughters truly are wicked. They don't have faith, because their father had worldly ambitions. But for us who've made mistakes, who've lived like the world, for who among us hasn't made decisions based on worldly ambitions?

Who doesn't have a compromised faith in this messy world? Is there hope for us? The good news of these verses is that God is faithful to Abraham, despite messiness and the compromised faith of someone like Lot. Because in these last verses, we see that God is faithful even when we are wicked. Look at verse 36 with me. It says, Thus both daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father. Now this line has no pair, and it's meant to stand out to absolutely shock us. It's truly disgusting. Life has come not in a good way, through wickedness. But what we see here in our passage is both good and bad. Look at verse 37 and 38.

They have a sort of double meaning. The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day. And the younger also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ami. He is the father of the Ammonites to this day. The fact that they have sons, that these sons become the fathers of the Moabites and the Ammonites is bad. The failure of Lot to be a good father has led to a great tragedy.

These nations are wicked enemies of God. Moab later try and curse Israel. They're kind of the opposite of Lot who blesses Abraham as they ought. They clearly follow their mother's wickedness, and that is a great tragedy. But this passage is actually good news and comfort for those who trust in God's promises.

[21 : 12] See, the comment to this day is to show the persevering nature of these nations and God's kindness to Lot. This is a genuine resurrection story. Lot began our passage dead in a cave, and now has been delivered to life. God has been faithful to his promise to Abraham. He blesses Lot who blessed Abraham. It's messy and it's complex, but we see it maybe more clearly in Deuteronomy.

Turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 2. It's just a little bit over, a couple of books over. Deuteronomy chapter 2. We're going to look at two verses. Look with me at verse 9 and see what it says.

And the Lord said to me, do not harass Moab or contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land for a possession, because I have given it to the people of Lot for a possession.

Did you hear that? Look again with me at verse 19. Verse 19 says, And when you approach the territory of the people of Ammon, do not harass them or contend with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot for a possession. Do you see, God has been faithful to his promises to Abraham. He blesses Lot. Lot's line is continued, and in this first case study of those who bless Abraham, it reveals God's trustworthiness. Lot is blessed far more than expected, not just in descendants, but for some reason God's kindness, he gives him land to possess.

Now, by the writing of the book of Genesis and the rest of the first five books, those two nations' wickedness is clear and obvious. They're wicked. But Lot has appointed these lands before Israel's exodus and their animosity between these two nations occurs. God gave them a land to possess.

[23 : 30] Do you see the grace overflowing for a stuff-up like Lot? This is a complex conclusion. It's not all good. It's not all bad. It's a warning, but it is more than that. And we see how our God deals with mess.

See, Lot is the nephew of Abraham, the first one to bless him, and it seems that he has a particular joy for his faith. Lot is in the line of our Lord Jesus.

We see this in the book of Ruth. There's a Moabite woman who seeks to preserve her family's line, just like the daughters. But she actually is just like Lot, a true daughter of Lot, who blesses, not curses, blesses the descendants of Abraham. She marries a man by the name of Boaz, Boaz in the tribe of Judah. Now, Judah himself, of one of the 12 tribes, the man is famous for his own sexual misconduct.

His daughter-in-law deliberately tricked Judah, not totally unlike Lot's story. So we have Judah, the tribe of Judah, a people born out of sexual misconduct. We have Moab, a people born out of sexual misconduct. So both Boaz and Ruth, children of sexual perversity, bring forth their great-grandson, the great king David. But David, in his sexual misconduct with Bathsheba, fathers Solomon.

And from David's descendants comes the promised one of God, the promised Lord Jesus, the king of kings. But notice again the grace to Lot and the wonderful kindness of God. For people who live in a messy world and who are sexually broken, this passage is amazing news. See, when we read the genealogies in Matthew chapter 1 of Jesus and we see Ruth, we should be thinking, Ruth the Moabite, the child of incest, and at the same time, the faithfulness of God to Abraham, blessing those who bless him.

[25 : 38] Because Lot's faith, God has been gracious to him. And it's into the mess of our humanity that Jesus has come, not apart from it, but among the mess, taking on human flesh.

The way God the Son becomes a man into a sexually perverted family, this teaches us so much about how God operates to save messy people just like us.

God's kindness is that he doesn't just deal with us from distance or separately, but God comes and dwells among our mess, personally. Just as he delivered Lot in this passage, through the evil of his daughters, to bring about blessing, God came in the flesh and dwelt among us, among our mess.

Christ never sinned, but came to save the world and to deliver it from sin. Christ's example is how we ought to live in the world, not letting the world infect our hearts and minds, but still being a part of it and dwelling in it.

The solution to Lot's sight problem is not to be like the Amish and start a commune. See, God works through the mess of man, not separate from it. And we shouldn't try to be different to the way that God operates like that.

[26 : 53] No, he came and dwelt among us. How can we avoid the infection of worldliness that we have in this world and still live like Christ, dwelling among sinners?

Ultimately, we need to see by faith and not by sight. This means having faith in the hope of God's promises, not looking to gratify the flesh. Let me encourage you to grapple with that over morning tea and discuss how that might look in day-to-day life.

But of course, coming in the flesh alone isn't how God fulfilled his promises, is it? But through the wicked men, the most wicked time in history when they cry, crucify him, crucify him.

God works through the wicked acts of man to bring about his promises, to flood us with grace. Sin persisted through the flood in Noah's day and sin continued through Sodom in the fire, but sin is finally defeated as Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

God has finally delivered people like us with compromised faith, who have made mistakes, messy people, through Jesus' death on the cross in our place.

[28 : 09] Abraham's promise to bless the world is fulfilled in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The nations will be blessed through Jesus, the true son of Abraham.

The nations will be a part of God's family through the Lord Jesus' resurrection. Abraham's promises explode going to the world because of our Lord Jesus.

And that is the wonderful grace of our Lord Jesus, of our God, to messy people like Lot, like us. So for people with messy lives and the mess of sin, will we be like Lot?

Are we going to bless God's man, Jesus, trusting in Jesus? Because like Lot, there is grace for sinners like us with compromised faith.

God is faithful and gracious to those who trust in Jesus. Friends, to wrap up, I've said that there are two points to this tale of two daughters. One, a caution, and one, a great hope.

[29 : 12] The caution is that we should not seek the world like Lot. Disaster awaits. But the hope is that despite our mistakes, God is faithful and gracious.

See, this passage has one main point. It's about this central question. And I hope you see that. God is faithful to bring about his promises even in the mess of sin.

He is gracious and works through us, evil people, to bring about good. Let's pray. Thank you, Lord, for your kindness to us.

In our wickedness and sin, you have shown us grace. We deserve judgment. Please forgive our worldly ambitions and living like the rest of the world.

Help us to flee to see by faith and not by sight. Amen.