

BIBLE CHARACTERS

by

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CHAPTER 9

LOT

One object I have in presenting this character is to draw a contrast between a man who lived wholly for GOD, and was out-and-out a man of GOD and one who tried to live for both worlds: - or what we should consider a worldly professor of Christianity. We have such a contrast in the life of Daniel as contrasted with Lot.

Lot was one of those characters who are easily influenced. You may look upon his life as a failure, although in the sight of the world he would have been called in his day a success.

I think we have many more Lots nowadays than we have Daniel's. Where you can find one man like Daniel, Jeremiah, or John the Baptist, or Paul, you will find ten thousand men like Lot.

The first glimpse that we catch of this man was at Haran. He was a nephew of Abram, who was called the friend of GOD. GOD had called Abram out of his native land, away from the idolaters that surrounded him, into the promised land, and we are told that Lot, his nephew, went with him. And I think, perhaps, that is just the key to his character. He went with Abram. So long as he stayed with Abram he got on very well. His mistake was in leaving him. Some men all through life have to be bolstered up by others. When they are at home, home has an influence over them; or while they are among their relatives or friends they stand well, but when they are away, and trial and temptation come, and the world comes in like a flood upon them, they are carried away. The Scriptural account we have of Lot is in Genesis 11. In verse 31 we are told that Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his sons son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abrams wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan, and they came unto Haran and dwelt there.

Abram and Lot were at Haran for five years. Haran was halfway between the land that Abram was called from and the land that he was called to. He only came halfway out. I think a good many men have got to Haran, and there they remain. They are not more than half converted. They want to live on the borders all the while. They neither enjoy the world nor CHRIST. They have enough religion to make them wretched, but not enough to make them joyful. They need some calamity to bring them completely out of the world. So it was with Abram and Lot.

They stayed there until Abrams father died. It has been quaintly said - We never get beyond the half-way house until our old man is dead. After this Abram moved into the promised land, where his faith was tested. When he arrived he found the country inhabited; and he had not been there very long when a famine struck the land. Then Abram took his nephew, Lot, and went down into Egypt, where they were successful from a worldly point of view. They grew rich; but when riches come troubles generally come with them. When they came out of Egypt into the promised land there was a strife among the herdsmen of Abram and of Lot. They got into a quarrel. But no one could have a lawsuit with Abram. He said to his young nephew, Now we cannot afford to quarrel here before these heathen - before the nations around us; we must set them a good example. And now you take the right or you take the left, and let there be no strife among our men. He let Lot choose - and Lots choice was a terrible mistake.

Wealth becomes a trouble if it is procured in Haran, or Egypt, or Sodom. It brings no blessing if GOD's people get it out of Canaan. It was in Egypt that Abram denied his wife. GOD did not call Abram there, but to the promised land where his faith had to be tried; and where he stayed but a little while, before he went down to Egypt to escape the famine. There he got riches, and sorrow with them; as we read: And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abrams cattle and the herdsmen of Lots cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; of if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the Garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. Lot allowed the world to get the advantage; and that is where thousands of Christians are failing in the present day. They do not let the Lord choose for them in regard to temporal things, and they make great mistakes.

Lot never ought to have left Abram. If he had lost some of his property, if he had not got on quite so well, if he had not accumulated wealth quite so fast, it would have been better for him and his family - if he had never left that holy man whom the Lord delighted to talk with, that man who was in communion with GOD, and to whom the angels often came, and brought messages from Heaven.

But Lot was probably like a great many men around us. He was careless; he was covetous; he looked to the right and he looked to the left, and he looked toward Sodom, and observed the well-watered plains, I imagine him saying, Now, if I take these well-watered plains, I can accumulate wealth very fast. I know Sodom is a very wicked place, but I will not go to Sodom. He at first did not intend to go into Sodom; but he had pitched his tent toward Sodom; and when a man begins to pitch his tent toward Sodom, and to look at it, it will not be long before he will be inside. His heart will be there, and by and by his heart will take him down to Sodom. Lot does

it to sell cattle. He goes down to Sodom to transact business, and some of the business men tell him that he would succeed much better in Sodom than he could living out there on the plain, and he had better come down into the city.

He knew it was an exceedingly wicked place. He knew that there were very great sinners there. He knew it was corrupt. He knew there was danger of his being ruined; and if he had only looked into the future, and could have seen that it would be ruin to his family, he would not have put his children right into the way of temptation. But he took them down into that city. He left the society of Abram, and went into Sodom. There was his mistake. He did not let GOD choose for him.

I most firmly believe that more men make a mistake just there than in any other situation in life. Many a man starts out, and he does not ask GOD to direct him in his business or his plans. If Lot had asked the GOD of Abram to have selected for him and guided him, He would never have led him to Sodom. GOD knew what was going to take place there. He knew that judgment was coming down on those cities of the plain.

But Lot was like a great many men nowadays. He thought that he could manage his own affairs. He did not want GOD to interfere with his business transactions. He could pray about spiritual things, but he did not think it necessary to pray about his business. The idea that he should ask GOD when he had such a chance as that! He could have all these well-watered plains, and he chose them.

Now, after Lot had been in Sodom for a little while, and had become known to the men of Sodom, you would probably have found them saying he was very successful, and that he would be a much richer man than his uncle Abram in a little while. He was a long-sighted man. As a friend said the other day, Lot was considered a very long-sighted man in the eyes of the world, and Abram just the reverse; but which had the longest sight in the end? Abram had got a glimpse of the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is GOD. He lived for another world; he did not live for this. He was the long-sighted man, and Lot was the short-sighted one. And these men whom we now call farseeing, whom we call so shrewd and so wise, oh, how many of them are blind!

Lot was one of those men who are determined to die rich. There was a man taken into one of our insane asylums a few years ago, from one of the Western cities; he was resolved to be rich. I was acquainted with him. How he just turned every stone to accumulate wealth! All his energy and every faculty was pushed toward that one end. Wealth, wealth, wealth! money, money, money! was his cry, and at last it drove him mad, and they took him to the madhouse, where he threw himself into a rocking-chair, and cried, Millions of money, and in a madhouse! That was all there was of his life. Pretty short, wasn't it? Sixty years gone, millions of money, and in a madhouse; and he died there. That was the summing up of his life.

There is many a man determined to be rich, though he has to take his children into temptation. I cannot conceive of a greater calamity that can happen any mans child than to have all the money he wants to spend, and nothing to do. And this was the drift of Lots family.

But yet he was not without warning.

War came on, and the Kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were defeated, and the enemy took Lot, and all his property, with spoil from both the cities, and fled. A messenger came and told Abram; when he heard of it he took his trained servants and started in pursuit of the enemy; he overtook them, defeated them in battle, rescued the prisoners, and brought back their goods.

Melchizedek, the King of Salem and priest of the Most High GOD, came forth with bread and wine, and blessed Abram. Then the King of Sodom came out and said to him, Now, you may still have the money; you may take the goods; but give me the souls. But a man that has been blessed by Melchizedek, who is first by interpretation King of Righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is King of Peace, is not to be tempted by the goods of Sodom. Abram says, I have lifted up my hand to the GOD of Heaven and earth, that I will not take a thing from the King of Sodom. It should not be said that the King of Sodom had made Abram rich. He did not want any Sodom money, for if he took Sodom money he would have to take Sodom judgment when that judgment came.

Now, instead of Lot staying out of Sodom, as he ought to have done, he went back into it. I can imagine him saying: I must go back and make up what I have lost. There was another of Lots mistakes - returning to the city after such a warning as he had had. But he went back; and from that day until destruction came upon Sodom - final destruction - and the city was destroyed, Lot was perhaps the most popular man in it.

He was popular because he was the nephew of the man who had been such a benefactor to the men of Sodom; and if you had gone into the city a few years after, you would have found him one of the most successful and one of the shrewdest and keenest men in all the cities of the plain, in the sight of the men of Sodom.

They would have told you how he came off the plains only a few years before, worth only a few thousand dollars, and now he had accumulated great wealth. You would have found his name among the very highest in the social list. His family moved in the upper ten, in the highest circles as far as the world was concerned. He got into office. We find him sitting in the gate, which was a sign that he held the office of judge or other high position.

He was a very honorable man in the eyes of the men of Sodom. He had got into the society of kings and princes, and in the eyes of the world was a very prosperous man. He may have had a title to his name - The Hon. John C. Lot, of Sodom, would sound very well. And he was perhaps a very prominent candidate for political honors, and they all desired to show him respect because he was wealthy. Perhaps he owned the very best corner lots in Sodom; and if they had the custom of putting their names on buildings as they do now, you would have found Lot on a great many of the finest buildings in Sodom. Yes, getting on amazingly well. And if he was a judge, Judge Lot would have sounded well, would it not? If they had had railroads then, he would have been one of the most prominent men in all those movements; he would have had large shares in the railroads, and been to the front in all stock operations.

He was one of those men who had not religion enough, as the world says, to make him unpopular. He was a man of immense influence. That is what they would have told you down in Sodom. There was not a man in the whole city who had more influence than Lot.

The world thought that Abram had made a great mistake, He stayed out there on the plains with his tent and altar, and if he came to Sodom when Lot did, he too might have had a high position. You would have found Mrs. Lot driving, perhaps, four-in-hand, the best turn-out in Sodom, and her daughters at the theaters, and in most places of amusement, and there is the family, just moving in the very highest circles in that city. That is what the world calls prosperity. That is what they call getting on. And you would have found, probably, that Lot was reported to be the richest man in all Sodom, and if they had to pay income tax, then his would have stood the highest; a shrewd man, a wise man, a successful man. That is the man of the world.

He is the successful man. But, look! Though everything was moving on well, when he had been there twenty years, this wise man, this influential man, had not won a convert. These worldly Christians don't get many converts - note that. These men who are so very influential seldom get many converts to CHRIST. The world goes stumbling over them. Lot was what we might call a paying, but not a praying member. Some men seem to boast of that, and they will tell you with a good deal of pride. Well I am one of the paying members; and when they come into church they have the very best pew, and they come swinging down the broad aisle, and the whole church turns round to look at them: they say, He is one of the best men we have - one of the most liberal men in the congregation; it is true he seldom comes out to the prayer meetings, for he is not a praying man. You will not find him identifying himself with the despised, and taking a stand among the poor and helping them; that was not the character of Lot.

At last two messengers appear at the gate of the city. The sun is setting on Sodom for the last time. The men of the City would see it in the morning when it would rise; but it was never going to set on those five cities of the plain again. And when the messengers - for there was not any written word then as now; GOD often sent His messages by angels in that dispensation, who held communion with men - when these messengers arrived at the gate, it seems they meet Lot there, and Lot knew them. But it had been probably a long time since he had seen any messengers of that kind. When he lived back there on the plain with Abram, it was quite a common thing for Abram to entertain angels; they brought many a sweet communication from Heaven to him. But now they come down to see what Lot is doing, and what a miserable, shocking state of things they see! Here was the nephew of that sainted man of GOD immersed in Sodom, and his family, you might say, wrecked and ruined. And Lot got up and bowed and asked them to his house; but they refused to go into his house. They said, No, we will walk about the streets tonight; we have come to take account of this city. But he constrained them, and they went in; and when it was noised through Sodom that he was entertaining two men, it was not long before his house was surrounded by a great crowd. An awful scene ensued. When the men of Sodom came and demanded of Lot to send those men out, he came outside of his house and closed the door, and besought them, begged them, not to harm them. Now see how much influence he has got. This fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge. And they pressed sore upon him, and almost burst in the door; and if the messengers had not come out and smitten the crowd with blindness, they would have slain Lot right there. They had not the least respect for him.

The world is just now cheering on some of these worldly professors, and talking about their being men of great position and great influence. But the world cares not for you. If you make one false step, how they will sneer; if misfortune comes upon you and you lose your property, then you will see how much they respect you. How much did they care for Lot? He had such great influence and such high position, but it is all gone now.

The angels said to him, Hast thou anywhere besides, any of your family here? And what did they find? Why, his children; his daughters had married men of Sodom. Oh, what a fall!

You take your children to Sodom, and you will find it will not be long before they will want to stay there. It is easier to lead your children into temptation than it is to lead them out. What a mistake Lot had made! He had taken them away from the society of Sarah and Abram, that holy family, living out on the plain in communion with Heaven daily. He had taken them down to Sodom, and they were steeped in the sins of Sodom. The angels said to him, If you have any here beside, go in haste and bring them out. And you can see that old man with his gray hairs and his head bowed down, moving heart-broken through the streets of Sodom, at the midnight hour. All that he had accumulated was going to be swept away now. GOD was going to destroy the city. Lot, make haste; get your family out of this place. Look at him. He goes to a house, and you can hear him knocking at the dead hour of night. At last someone gets up and opens the window, and puts his head out. Who is there? It is your father-in-law, Lot.

Well, what are you here at this time of night for?

I have a couple of messengers at my house; they have come down from Heaven to tell me that GOD is going to destroy this place, and He wants to have me get you out; come to my house at once, that we may leave the city early in the morning.

But they mock him. Ah! poor Lot has lost his testimony; we never hear that he had put up an altar in Sodom; his own children do not believe him; they mock him. I tell you, when men live so like the world that their own children have no confidence in their piety, they have sunk very low. When a man cannot influence his own children, even though he has made millions, what a wreck he has made of life! You talk about a man being successful. You must trace him from the cradle to the grave to see how successful he is. You want to see what influence he leaves behind him; you want to see how he leaves his family: and then you can judge whether a man is successful or not. For a man to accumulate wealth, and ruin his family and leave a blight upon them, that is not true success.

Thus the old man at the midnight hour is pleading with his children to come with him. But they mock him. Why, Sodom was never more prosperous than now. There is no sign of a coming judgment; no sign that Sodom is going to be burnt up.

The Savior tells us they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building; all went on as usual. They did not believe there was any sign of the coming judgment. The sun shone as brightly the day before their destruction as it had shone for years. The stars then, perhaps were glittering in the heavens as brightly as ever; and the moon threw her light down upon the city; and Lot's sons-in-law mocked him. He couldn't get them out. I see him going through the streets with his head bowed down and great tears trickling down his cheeks. Ask him now about his life, and he will tell you it has been a total failure. He goes back to his home; and early in the morning the angels had to take him almost by force and hasten him out of the city. He could not bear the thought of leaving his loved ones there to perish while GOD dealt in judgment with that city.

My friends, is not that a fair picture of hundreds and thousands at the present time? Have you not been trying to accumulate wealth even to the neglect of your children, so that today they are

lifting up their voices against your GOD, and against your Bible, and against you? They do not care for your feelings; are they not trampling them under their feet? Perhaps many of the parents have gone to their graves, and the children are now squandering what their parents gathered together. What an example we have here in the case of Lot, and how it ought to open the eyes of many a business man, and cause him to see that his life is going to be a total wreck if he takes his children into Sodom's judgment when the judgment comes.

Away yonder on the plain of Mamre, I see Abraham standing before the Lord, and pleading, pleading, pleading, that the righteous may not perish with the wicked. But GOD is more pitiful than even Abrahams prayer. Not only will He save the righteous, but He will spare the city if He can find fifty righteous there. But Abraham doubts if there be so many. Peradventure there are forty, wilt Thou destroy the city for lack of ten? No; if there are forty; or thirty, yes, or twenty, or even ten, I will spare Sodom for their sake. Now, thinks Abraham, surely Lot and his household and family are safe. Surely even down in Sodom there is a church in his house, at least ten souls. Alas! no, Abraham! Not a solitary one except Lot himself. They had all become infected with the moral disease of Sodom - pride, fullness of bread and abundance of idleness; this was her iniquity; neither did she strengthen the poor and needy; and they were haughty and committed abomination before GOD; therefore He destroyed them as He saw good. But it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for those who in these enlightened days have walked in the same evil ways.

Now, just take an inventory of what that man lost. He lost twenty years of time. We do not find that he did any good down there at all; he did not get one inhabitant out of the doomed city. These worldly Christians that talk about having an influence over the world - where is it? I would like to see it. Will you tell me where there is a worldly Christian who has tarried in the race in order to save men; where are the men he has reached? Not one man won to GOD in all those twenty years by Lot. He lost all his property; everything he gained in Sodom - he lost it all; he lost his family all but his two daughters, and they were so stained by the sins of Sodom that they soon fell into an awful sin; and the last thing we see of Lot is on the mountain side, where he has fallen into that sin and become the father of the Moabites and the Ammonites that ever afterwards were the enemies of GOD and His people. What a dark picture it is, the end of a poor backslider; the end of a man that went to Sodom and lived for Sodom, and had to take Sodom's judgment.

Ah, my friends, what a contrast between the end of Lot and the end of Daniel, or of Elijah, or John the Baptist, or any of those men who stood true to GOD. How their names shine now upon the pages of history and how their light comes down through the centuries! But look at Lot. What a wreck!

And yet that is the man whom the world calls successful while he is living. Ah, there is many a man today who is just following the footsteps of Lot, seeking to get wealth, seeking to get position in this world, setting aside the GOD of Abraham, setting aside the GOD of the Bible, and trampling the prayers of their mothers and fathers under their feet. They say Give me wealth and I will give you everything else. Shall we not learn the lesson? Shall we not profit by the life of Lot? I believe that is what these lives are recorded for.

Father, let me ask this question. Where are your sons? Where are your children? Let the question come home to you - where are they? And if they have gone astray, who is to blame? Who is to

blame?

I heard not long ago of a young man who came home a number of times drunk, and the servants told the father of it. He said: Well, I will sit up tonight and will see. He sat up until past midnight, and then he heard someone trying to get the latch-key into the door. He listened and listened. It was a long time before the young man entered. The father went and stood in the hall, and when his boy came in he saw that he was drunk. Immediately he ordered him out of the house. He said, Never show yourself here again; I will not have you coming to my house and disgracing me. But after the son had been gone a little while the father could not sleep; he remembered that he was the first one that put temptation in the way of the boy, for he had had liquor upon his own table. Well now, I am to blame, he said. And he got out of bed and dressed himself, and went out upon the streets and asked a policeman if he had seen the young man. After hunting for hours, at last he found his drunken son, and brought him home; and when he became sober he said, My son, I am more to blame than you are. He wept over him, and asked his boy to forgive him, and he said, Now let us try to lead different lives. And the father set his son a better example, and saved him from destruction.

There is many a man who has ruined his own sons; who has taken them into the way of temptation and they have gone astray. May GOD show us, as fathers, the importance of living rightly before our children; and if we are doing anything in any business that is dishonorable, in order to make money for our children, better a thousand times for us to leave them a clean record, a clean character, than to leave them millions of money that we have not got honestly. I tell you we need to have children a good deal shrewder and wiser than we have at the present time, to keep the money that has been gathered dishonestly. It is a good deal better to live with GOD and leave them less, and leave them a good, clean character, such as Daniel left in Babylon, than it is to take them down to Sodom and live as Lot did, and have judgment come upon them, after we were dead and gone.

~ end of chapter 9 ~
