

## Beacons of the Bible

Lot

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"Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom."  
Genesis 13:12

Many heirs of glory live ingloriously. Heaven is their purchased rest, but their footsteps seem to be downward. Angels are their commissioned guards, but too often Satan leads them in his chains. The accuser gains frequent advantage. He rolls them in the mire, and can ask, "Are these the garments of God's sons?" In their hearts there is incorruptible seed, but nasty weeds are intermixed. They are translated in spirit into the kingdom of grace, but still the flesh is weak. As justified, they are complete. Their title-deeds to heaven are sure. As sanctified, they are miserable shortcomers. Their outward evidence is full of blots. The fact is patent. We see it, and we marvel not. We see it, and we mourn. But while we mourn, let us take heed. A good man's failings should, through grace, be our escape.

Such is the gloomy preface to Lot's story. If the Spirit's hand had not withdrawn the veil, and showed the secrets of the inner man, the appearances would leave us in much doubt. The visible career would startle and perplex. The most hopeful hope would place him tremblingly in the list of saints.

But the Spirit, who by the pen of Moses, records his tottering walk, by Peter's lips announces him as "just." Thrice, in short compass, a glorious title enshrines him among the saved--2 Pet. 2:7, 8. The voice of truth proclaims him "righteous." Therefore in God's sight righteous he was.

In fallen man no righteousness can find a root, or raise its head, except when sown by sovereign grace. Grace gives the faith, which alone justifies. Grace leads the sinner to the Savior's merits. Grace hides him in the pierced side. Grace gives the hand to put on Christ's covering robe. Grace opens the lips to plead redemption's work. Grace only can unite to Christ, and only they who are ingrafted into Him--sheltered in His wounds--washed in His blood, are righteous before God. But Lot was righteous. The Spirit bears this witness. Therefore Lot was a child of grace--heir of God--joint heir with Christ.

The Spirit supplies further evidence. He tells us, that his life in the vile city was distressed. Every day he saw vile deeds, and they were vexation to him. Every day he heard vile sounds, and they were barbed arrows to his grieving heart. Evil was hateful to his renewed spirit. He breathed not freely in such atmosphere. Familiarity blunted not the piercing edge. Each hour came laden with its sorrows. He dwelt in Sodom willingly indeed, but still unhappily. The pain was evidence of uncongenial principle. In spite of miserable frailties, Lot was a righteous man.

A rough shell may hold a pearl. There may be silver amid much dross. Life may exist within the stem, when leaves are seared and branches dry. The spring may yet be deep, while waters trickle scantily. A spark may live beneath much rubbish. Thus Lot is a Beacon, giving proof that grievous faults may co-exist with grace.

Approach the story. Lot's first days are bright with hope. He is near kinsman to Abraham. He journeys by the patriarch's side. Together they leave Ur. Together they reach Canaan. He early received knowledge of the living God. In youth he was disciplined in a godly school. A godly model was before him. Thus in life's morn he was allured to godliness.

But godly atmosphere nips not the roots of evil. The school may be most pure, but the scholar may soon go astray. The time arrives when these kinsmen must part. Their herds multiply. The same fields are narrow to pasture the united flocks.

Now a difference of character appears. Abraham shines forth unselfish--noble--generous. He yields selection of abode to Lot. He is content to take what his more selfish relative rejects. His offer is truly great. Lot's choice is narrow-minded. Hear Abraham, "Is not the whole land before you? separate yourself, I ask you, from me--if you will take the left hand, then I will go to the right--or if you depart to the right hand, then I will go the left." Genesis 13:9. Lot surveys--calculates--resolves. "Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord or the beautiful land of Egypt. Lot chose that land for himself—the Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. So while Abram stayed in the land of Canaan, Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom, among the cities of the plain." Genesis 13:10-12

Lot only cares to gather this world's good. Water abounds. Herbage is fertile. The flocks will thrive. His produce will increase. Coffers will swell. He desires to be great in temporal pelf. No other thought occurs, or, if occurring, it is soon stifled.

But had these luxuriant plains no disadvantage? Who were the neighbors? What was that Sodom, beside which his tent is fixed? "The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Genesis 13:13. Theirs was no

common disrepute. Lot knows it, and yet he selects the neighborhood. The fields invite. He disregards prosperity of soul. The moral purity of his household is light in the balance. Spiritual welfare is ignored. The miserable choice is made. Let the soul starve, if outward plenty be secured.

Alas! in every age, at every turn, Lot meets us. Callings--professions--alliances--partners--friends--homes must be selected. What now is the inquiry? Is the prime question, where will eternal interests receive most care? Where will godly associates surround? Where will conspicuous piety allure to heaven? Where is the Gospel honored--proclaimed--adorned? Where is Christ raised on high as All?

Ah! when will vain man be taught, that there is no profit, if the soul suffers loss? When will externals be viewed through the one medium of eternity? When will the truth be seen, that he who gains heaven gains earth besides? When will the fact be realized, that all things are the Christian's, whether "life or death, or things present, or things to come." 1 Cor. 3:22. Christ is true riches--the pearl of great price--the treasure of treasures, laid up above the injury of rust and moth--high beyond the despoiling hand of thieves. He then, who wins Christ, wins all. Happy they, who "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord." Phil. 3:8. Happy they, who avoid the partnership--the profit--the connection--the rich pastures of earthly-mindedness! Happy they, who choose rather to be poor on earth, and share the thrones and crowns of heaven!

Now the scene darkens. How surely is forgetfulness of God a descent without escape! Feet cannot stand on slippery ground. Let the stone roll, it will move rapidly. Thus we soon find, that Lot is weary of tent-life in the plain. The record states, "He dwelt in Sodom." Genesis 14:12.

The rural quietude is left. He seeks the city. The walls are entered. Nearest contact is desired. To the very midst of all iniquity he moves his abode. He plants himself--his wife--his children--in the center of abominations. He levels all barriers. He courts evil's contagion. He tempts the devil to tempt them all. We can conceive no motive for thus passing the city gates, but love of pleasure--indulgence--gain.

Remember Lot's family thus fixed in Sodom, all you who deliberately place children in corrupting circles. But will he prosper? None ever truly prosper, who leave God. His presence is blessing. His blessing makes rich, and he adds no sorrow thereto. Is Lot's ease now uninterrupted? Is his comfort an unruffled stream? Soon the din of war is heard. Hostile invaders cross the borders. The men of Sodom flee defeated. The town is pillaged. All property is ransacked. The inhabitants are enchained. Lot and his family share the prisoners' doom. Their goods are seized. They are dragged forth to distant bondage. Remember Lot despoiled and captive, all you who seek joys and delights, where God is not honored. There is no peace, but in His smile. There is no safety, but beneath His

sheltering wings.

But God forgets not His poor erring child. He smites, but still He loves. He prunes the tree, that it may bear more fruit. "Though he causes grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." Lam. 3:32. Mercy still hovers round him. Deliverance is graciously ordained. Tidings reach Abraham of Lot's distress. He arms his numerous dependants. He pursues the victorious invaders. He entirely subdues them. He rescues Lot and his family from the captor's grasp.

Lot is now at liberty. He is free again to choose a home. Surely Sodom will be shunned. No! to that place he quickly returns. His will is to re-inhabit the accursed spot. Again he casts his anchor in the vile haven. He seeks the same neighbors. He prefers the proximity of the same iniquities. Ah! the deadening allurements of this world! How hard to dash away the cup, if once the poison has been tasted. God had most loudly warned. The warning is unheeded. Providence had frowned. The frown is slighted. Mercy had dealt lovingly. The love melts not. Weak seductions prevail. Again the hateful city is the chosen home.

And now iniquity revels unblushingly through the place. The waters rise to the brim. The cup overflows. God's patience can no more suffer. The cry ascending from this sink of evil reaches the heavens. Their conspicuous sin awakens conspicuous wrath. Vengeance waxes very hot. Tremendous overthrow must lay them low. Appalling letters must blazon the decree, "The wicked shall not go unpunished."

The last night of Sodom comes. It is indeed a night of horrors. Hell's monsters seem let loose. Can this scene be on earth? Can these vile wretches partake of humanity? Can Lot be resident among them? Yes, he is there; and God is not forgetful of him.

Angels are sent. They tell him their dreadful commission. The place is doomed to instant destruction. He is bade to collect his sons--his daughters--his sons-in-law--and all his own, and rapidly to flee. He goes forth to warn; but his own children jeer; and then the fatal morning comes. Lot seems in no holy haste to move. It is recorded--At dawn the next morning the angels became insistent. "Hurry," they said to Lot. "Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out of here right now, or you will be caught in the destruction of the city." Genesis 19:15.

But still he lingers. It is added, "When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the Lord was merciful." Genesis 19:16. But still he shrinks from fleeing to the mountain. He supplicates that he may tarry in the contiguous Zoar. Permission is obtained. "But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it." Genesis 19:22. How marvelous, how condescending

is the grace of God! "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed; because his compassions fail not." Lam. 3:22. But still there is terrible vengeance on abominable sin. Lot is safe in Zoar. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." Genesis 19:24. "And Abraham looked toward all the country of the plain, and beheld, and lo! the smoke of the country went up, as the smoke of a furnace." Genesis 19:28.

Here let the curtain drop. No good remains to be recorded. Enough of evil has been seen. Let Lot now disappear. But let his Beacon ever warn, that weak surrender to seducing enticement is misery and shame.

Believer, in this mirror do you see any features of yourself? If so, awake, arouse. Tread down all fascinations. Reject forbidden profit. Give to the winds desire of worldly indulgence. Take up the cross. Deny yourself. Come out. Be separate. Touch not the unclean thing. Follow Christ fully. Put on the whole armor of God. Fight the good fight of faith. Act valiantly. So only you will win good trophies. So only will your crown be bright.

Many eyes are keenly watching. Many ears listen to your converse. Many sieves test your consistency. Let your sincerity be clear as the midday sun. Be thoroughgoing. Let firm 'indifference to ease' be stamped on your whole walk. Thus be a blessing to your house--your town--your country. Thus bring glory to the Lord, who *called you from the filth of earth to walk with Him in white.*

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