

## When Compromise Shackles Freedom

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### Genesis 19:1-17

“One of the truest tests of integrity is its blunt refusal to be compromised.” -  
Chinua Achebe (a Nigerian writer)

“Compromise, while at times morally necessary or at least justifiable, is more often only the first permission for a person (or society) to begin a long downhill descent.” - Dennis Prager

Premise: there is a point at which humans must take a stand or have their freedoms shackled. Agreeing that there are philosophical and perceptual differences among people is a way to find common ground for honest debate. However, in matters related to the things of God, those who attempt to find common ground with those who oppose God will soon find that there is a war going on which they have not started, but a war that contains every element of the most vicious and cruel wars this planet has ever known. In that war, people who have a longing to see other people come to know the will of God will seek avenues to explain His will and encourage people. They will begin to look for ways they can accommodate the contrary attitudes, opinions, and philosophies of the opposing individuals so as to win them to the truth. That placating or compromising approach is the platform upon which they conduct their business with opponents most of the time. That is to say, people who seek to follow the truth of God will seek a place of accommodation or compromise to win and convert dissidents (very often misreading Paul’s famous words in 1Cor. 9:22 “...I am made all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some”). But, this very behavior - when it involves compromise with our own moral values - will be the very door by which the devil will enter to cause us grief. It may also be the very barricade which blocks us from receiving the blessings of God.

But, causing grief to those who love God is not necessarily the motive nor program of those people who stand opposed to what we call “righteous principles.” And that is because those opponents of right have an entirely different view about “principles.” That view is not born of a conscious and planned resistance to what is right, but generates from a wrong-headedness (we call it depravity) related to an unconverted soul. While they may have a set of rules to play by, those rules are not born of the Holy Spirit. Those rules may be what “Mama taught them,” or they

may be what they believe will give them an advantage, or put money in their pocket, or land something valuable in their lap. But, since the carnal mind is at enmity with God, those rules will not be followed for the purpose of glorifying and obeying the Lord, but rather, there is always some human, some carnal, reason. The real deception today though, is that so many people have actually made those human reasons to be religious reasons, or at least a justifiable reason from a human standpoint. And they promote those reasons as though they have come from God, or they promote them as being necessary as far as human need is concerned. So, when such people get into a contest with believers over common ground, they will never budge. The believer will be forced to compromise beyond what is moral, or there will be no common ground.

This is what I mean by taking a stand or submitting to slavery and having our freedoms put in chains. The haters of God hope with all their hearts to force believers to compromise everything they believe in. Without even knowing why, these enemies of the Lord want to drag believers down to their own depraved and corrupted level. So, believers who feel they **must** find common ground with them will find that they become slaves to wickedness in order to do so.

So, how do we avoid compromising ourselves into a kind of slavery? I think our text gives us some guidance. Let's take a look at Lot, and see if we can take something home with us about his experience. The Lord can give us wisdom from looking upon the blunders of others, if we will only learn.

I. First, let's ask the question, "How did Lot come to be living in Sodom?"

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Remember that Lot's cultural education taught him to be a tent dweller.

- ▶ In fact, God Himself sent Abraham into Canaan with Abraham knowing he was not to own a square foot of that country; rather God said He would give it to his seed: Act 7:5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not *so much as* to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child. These were the conditions by which Lot came also (not to own property).
- ▶ So, could we say that adopting a lifestyle change that was patterned after the worldlings next door could have been one of Lot's beginning compromises?
- Remember also, that Lot had lived around moral and spiritual conservatives all his life before he moved into Sodom. So, could we say that Lot's willingness to mix in with morally bankrupt Sodomites was another step toward compromise?

- ▶ Eph. 5:11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.
- ▶ Then, let's not forget what brought Lot to this fertile valley of the plain in the first place. You find in Gen. 13, that Abram and Lot became very wealthy in the livestock business and both had a multitude of cattle. Their herdsmen got into it over who was going to get the water and the pasture there where they were there between Bethel and Ai. So Abram has this solution that he discusses with Lot:
  - ▶ Gen 13:9 *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; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.*
    - Gen. 13:10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, *even* as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.
    - Gen. 13:11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan....
- I want you to note that in this transaction Abram gave Lot a choice because I am sure he felt maintaining peace between elect brethren was more important than a divide over resources. But notice also that Lot was looking out for Number One, and chose “all the plain of Jordan.”
  - ▶ I wanted to show you a map of the plain of Jordan, because if you saw it, you would see that it was divided down the middle by the Jordan River. The reason I point this out is to ask this question, “How hard would it have been for Lot to say, “Uncle Abram, you take the plain on the east side of Jordan, and I will take the plain on the west side?” So, what I am saying is, it looks pretty apparent that Lot was thinking about his own personal advancement and gain when he made the choice. This is where we see the first evidence of his tendency to let his own lusts override graciousness and uprightness. He compromised by taking advantage of Abram's generosity and peaceableness to satisfy his own personal covetousness.
  - ▶ Now back to where all this brought Lot to:
- II. There in Sodom, what did Lot gain, and what did he lose by his compromise?
  - ▶ Let me say, before we begin to look at this list that it is **not about living in the city vs. living in the country, necessarily. It is also not about living in the midst of a wicked culture or not, but about what decisions you make when you have opportunity to make such determinations about how you will interact with such a wicked culture, or how to do something about what you face in such a challenging life.**

- ▶ I also want to say that I believe Lot's staying in Sodom for the length of time he did is pretty sound proof that he was compromised. Staying any place where we feel forced to compromise will just lead to greater compromise and damage.
- ▶ Bro. Ed (Watson) and I once recovered an old riding mower from behind his tool shed. As we started shifting things around that old mower, a nest of wasps began threatening us...they had a nest in the deck of the mower. Guess what the first thing was that he and I did? We backed up away from that old mower really fast! We MOVED! We realized that if we stayed we would be stung!
- By his going to Sodom, Lot gained a condo with a permanent address well enough...but it was in a moral-less city...actually a cursed city
- But, he lost the personal liberty to select a spiritually healthy environment for his family
- ▶ I had a nephew call me about 2 years ago after a big flood hit Murray (KY). He had a nice split-level house there and the lower level was slightly below ground level. During the flood the sewage system of the city had backed up into his lower level and when it receded it left layers of human waste in there. He called me to ask questions about whether or not it was healthy for him and his family to stay upstairs in the house. After questioning him about how the split level was constructed, I told him they should move out until it was cleaned up. He was living in a potential death trap, because that home was in a condition not fit to be lived in. This incident reminds me of Lot's condo!
- Lot gained an opportunity to expose his family to urban life (whether that is good or bad, you be the judge...but some people believe city life is the best life, and they are willing to put up with the concentrated evil of such a place to have other things associated with it).
- But, he lost control of what his family was exposed to
- ▶ If we move in a culture where we treat the wickedness of the wicked as just ordinary...just business-as-usual, let's not expect our children to think there is anything aberrant, immoral, or twisted about what those around them are doing and saying. (Two daughters married men of Sodom, and two daughters thought it just normal to commit incest with dad to bring forth children)
- ▶ Was Sodom a place you would want to raise your kids?
- He gained the wherewithal to do gracious things for worthy visitors who came to the city
- But, he lost the power to manage and enhance their visit with him
- He gained the ability to negotiate...maybe (that sickening negotiation session with the perverts of Sodom in vv. 6-8)

- But he lost the ability to stand his ground and trust to God for solutions, and along with it, he lost sight of decency (note the sickening solution he recommends)
- He gained the disgust...even hatred of the perverted inhabitants of the city (see. V.9)
- And, he lost his wife (v.26), two married daughters (v.14), and his condo...he became a street person. To add to that, he lost the ability back there in Sodom to shape the moral character of his two unmarried daughters as evidenced by what happened in the mountains (read vv. 31-36).
- He gained a really great section of the country to grow his industry of livestock production, but he lost it and his industry in one day (see v.25...God overthrew those cities, and ALL THE PLAIN...and all that grew upon the ground...)

### III. Conclusion:

- We started this message pointing out that compromise can lead to a kind of slavery. I think we can see here that Lot became enslaved to the life-style and obligations he had set up by his compromise. At the end of our story, Lot is still involved in and victimized by the very things that compromise brought to him.
- I think the lesson to be learned here is that **if we compromise what we have received from the Lord, we can expect to be shackled in some way by it, and we can expect to be victimized by our own compromise.**
  - ▶ Every now and then, I wear my crocs outside...no socks...and do some shoveling of gravel. Guess what...every time I do that, I get gravel in those crocs through those little slits in them, and a lot of the time that gravel and my feet are wet or damp; when that is the case the gravel sticks in there and you can't just shake it out. So, when I do that, I have to be plagued by that gravel until I can limp over to the water faucet and wash that gravel off my feet and out of those crocs!
- The real lesson to learn though, is that when we come to a crossroads where we have the choice to be faithful to God or to compromise for some fickle earthly advantage, we will receive abundant blessings from the Lord by saying with Joshua, "...as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
- Ayn Rand wrote a statement in her book "Atlas Shrugged" that truly summarizes the effect of compromise: "In any compromise between good and evil, it is only evil that can profit. In that transfusion of blood which drains the good to feed the evil, the compromise is the transmitting rubber tube."