

DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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Eighth Week -- Wednesday

LOT IN SODOM AND ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION

"And Yahweh said, 'Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.' Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before Yahweh. And Abraham came near and said, 'Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?'" (Genesis 18:20-23).

Abraham at first thought it probable there might be sixty righteous men in Sodom, and he prayed that the place might be spared for their sake. This the Lord freely granted. The patriarch then had misgivings, that there might not be so many; and he ventured, with great humility to make successive intercessions for the reduction of the number until at last he thought he had ensured the safety of the place. The Lord then graciously promised to spare the town if only ten righteous men were found therein.

How little do the men of this world know the extent of even their worldly obligations to the righteous? How often has not the Lord spared great cities from plagues, pestilences, famines, earthquakes, fire and sword for the sake of the little sanctuary he has therein, to whom his Name is dear? They may be passed by, unregarded in the marketplace and the street; but they are the salt, the leaven that keeps the mass from corruption. They are His own now, and they shall shine forth more eminently as His in the day when He makes up his jewels. It is for them that a blessing rests upon the place where iniquity abounds, and it is for their sake that the curse and the ruin are averted from it. In the belief that the duty and privilege of intercession is too much neglected among Christians, we do earnestly recommend this case of Abraham's intercession for Sodom. It shows that the Lord is very pitiful and of great mercy, and it demonstrates that intercession has power with him and can prevail.

Abraham could not have been unmindful of Lot, who was in Sodom. The more the reader thinks of Lot the more difficult his case seems to be. From all that appears in the history, there was nothing very lovely in his character. Even his being eventually saved was more for Abraham's sake than for his own. He presents a very weak and selfish character. On the return from Egypt, he seems to have taken part with his herdsmen in their quarrels with those of Abraham; and when at length the latter proposes a separation for the sake of peace and leaves

to Lot the choice of place, he has not the grace to decline the generous offer of his elder and uncle. Instead he grasps it eagerly and adopts for his home the fat pastures of Sodom, although he well knows that the men in that quarter were the most wicked in the land.

At first Lot did not intend to mix with the citizens of Sodom but to live in his tent. But it is dangerous to trifle with duty or to venture too near the strongholds of sin. So before long we find Lot has left his tent and taken a house in Sodom. There he forms family ties; there his daughters marry; and gradually Lot gets more and more entangled. So strong is that entanglement that even his capture and rescue by Abraham do not suffice to break the chains that the world has cast around him. He goes back to Sodom and tarries there; and it would appear that this was under circumstances that inflicted much pain upon Abraham and probably offended him greatly. Otherwise it is difficult to see why Lot, instead of Eliezer of Damascus, was not considered Abraham's heir when it appeared he would die childless.

Lot's moral sense had been weakened by daily interchange with the ungodly people with whom he had fixed his home, and he was reluctant to leave Sodom. If Lot had been altogether right-minded, neither the finest pastures of the world nor all the conveniences and apparent advantages of Sodom would have induced him to go or to stay there. He would, instead, have fled the place; and there was nothing to prevent him from doing so, for he was not under any command to remain in the land of Canaan as was Abraham.

From all that appears in Lot's history, we might have strong fears for this man's eternal state. But Peter calls him a just man and says, "he vexed his righteous soul from day to day with the filthy conversation of the wicked." This gives us some relief by showing that his character was still *substantially* true. But it does not altogether clear him from these imputations. It shows that he had good feelings and perceptions but was a feeble-spirited man, lacking the strength to act on his own convictions. He was content to mourn over the guilt he saw, and would rather passively sit down amid the certainties of danger and the probabilities of judgment, than rouse himself to one great and energetic effort to be free and, at whatever sacrifice, depart from the abominable and tainted place.

Let us profit from Lot's example. There are still today "Sodoms," and there are still "Lots" who think that they may live in the world and pursue its profits and pleasures without danger as long as they have a religious profession. Let them beware; they are in great peril. If we are indeed God's people, let us come out of the world and touch not the unclean thing; for the church of God is not to be mixed up in the world but is to be distinguished from it.