

## How (Not) To Ruin Your Life - Genesis 19.15-29

Two weeks ago I preached about how we can rebuild after something was destroyed in our lives. We used Nehemiah and the city of Jerusalem as an example, but whenever possible we should avoid destruction altogether coming into our lives and to learn how to NOT ruin our lives today we will look at what happened to Lot and the city of Sodom.

Lot was Abraham's nephew and for a long time lived with his uncle. It is important to know that where Abraham went he always built an altar to worship God, but his nephew didn't. He lived with him but didn't share his uncle's faith. In 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis we read that Abraham moves into the hills of Canaan while Lot chooses to live in the city of Sodom. Lot followed what his eyes saw instead of seeking God's direction for his life.

Meanwhile Lot lived with a God fearing relative, things went well for him but now, as he moves out and is not seeking God's will for his life, things are about to change radically.

Moving to Sodom turned out to be a very bad decision as it was not a good place to raise a family. We read in Gen 13.13 that: **the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.** We must be very careful about the decisions we make, because they not only impact our lives but also our families.

The people of Sodom had gone so far from God and their sins were so great that He decides to destroy the city. Abraham asked God to save the righteous who lived there, among them his relatives, and the Lord responded that if he found 50 righteous people in the city he would not destroy it. Abraham begins to negotiate with God by asking; "and if there are only 45, then 40, 30, 20 and finally 10". To which the Lord replied that if he found 10 righteous people in the city he would not destroy it.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter we read that the angels who spoke to Abraham go to Sodom and Lot invites them to stay in his house. While they are eating, the men of the city surround the house and ask him to bring the guests out so that they could have sex with them." Lot offers instead his daughters. The angels responded by blinding all those who were outside and told Lot and his family to leave the city because God was going to destroy it. This incident shows clearly how evil, perverted this city was.

How is it possible that one wants to live in a city like this? It should not be necessary for an angel to tell us to get out! Lot and his wife are about to do teaches how not to ruin our lives.

1. If you don't want to ruin your life you ought to know that: **Sin won't go unpunished.** We will always pay a price for our sin. We all know about Sodom's sexual immorality, but there were other sins in Sodom that are described in Ezekiel 6.49 **Sodom's sins were pride, gluttony, and laziness, while the poor and needy suffered outside her door.** (This verse describes many people today). The people of Sodom only lived for themselves and were prideful.

Lot knew God through his uncle, yet he chose to live in the midst of sin. He ignored the reputation of Sodom because his only concern was to attain wealth. In verse 19 we observe that he had become one of the leaders of Sodom because he was sitting at the entrance of the city where the important people sat.

Lot achieved his "American" dream but in the midst of sin and at great cost to his whole family. If you do not want to destroy your life you have to know that sin won't go unpunished. Our sins will cost us something and sometimes the price is very high.

2 Secondly, if you don't want to ruin your life: **You shouldn't ignore God's voice.** Genesis 19.15-16 *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 right now, or you will be swept away in the destruction of the city!" 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.* Lot is warned about the danger of staying, but he hesitates, he wavers. Why would he God's warning? It makes no sense but that's what many do. God's mercy is shown in the fact that in spite of his hesitation, the angels seized their hands and took them out.

When God speaks to your life you shouldn't ignore his voice. If He says: leave, depart, repent, give, pursue, whatever he commands you to do, you ought to respond promptly because it is for your good and the good of your family. Many times we suffer because we ignore what we know God is telling us to do because we either forget or do not know that he disciplines those he loves.

Jonah was an example of what happens when one decides to ignore the voice of God. He ended up in the belly of a fish and learned that there are negative consequences in ignoring the voice of God. But the opposite is also true, obedience brings God's favor. What is that God needs to do get our attention? Let's never ignore His voice in our lives.

3 Thirdly, if you don't want to ruin your life: **Don't live life at your own pace.** 16 *At dawn the next morning the angels became insistent. "Hurry," they said to Lot...* He wasn't in a rush to leave although was told that the city was going to be destroyed, I ask: "What was he waiting for?" He knows that it was God speaking to him because he had seen a miracle performed by the angels.

*a. Was it because of family pressure? When he told them that they need to leave they thought Lot was joking. They did not want to leave. Many times we don't do what we should because of our relatives and other people close to us.*

*b. Was it because of all the things he was going to have to leave behind? He had wealth, and if he left he would have to start over.*

*c. Was it because he was an important person in Sodom, but in another city he would be a nobody?*

*d. Was it because his heart was divided. Although he and his wife didn't want to die they did not want to leave Sodom either. If it was possible, they would have carried Sodom with them in a suitcase.*

Whatever was the reason, he took his time, almost too much, and that could have cost him his life. We can't respond to God's voice when we feel like, at our own pace and timing. It's interesting that we are in a hurry to do anything else except when it comes to doing God's will.

If God speaks, we must obey promptly not when we feel like. We can't live without considering the will of God for our lives because if we do pain and destruction will follow.

4 Fourthly, if you don't want to ruin your life: **4. Don't make partial commitments.** We can see clearly that Lot wasn't fully committed to God; his heart was divided and that's why pain and destruction followed him.

We have to ask ourselves if we are fully committed to God. Believing in God is not enough. The devil also believes in God but at least he fears Him. Many say that they believe, but they don't even fear God because if they did they would act differently.

We want God, but not enough, we want the Church, but not enough, we want our spouse, but not enough, and so on. That's why we keep making partial commitments and basically what we are saying is: "You can count on me only if it is convenient, if it fits my calendar, my agenda", etc. We make just partial commitments.

In Luke 11:17 Jesus said: **Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall.** (a divided heart, family, church, marriage will fall) **23 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.** We must be totally committed to God, our spouse, our family, our Church. Only then we can avoid destruction.

If you want to ruin your life and experience pain, continue making partial commitments. It is impossible to have a fulfilling relationship with God, a fulfilling marriage, a happy family, a church that fulfills His call unless we take our commitments seriously and live them wholeheartedly.

5 Fifthly, if you don't want to ruin your life: **5. Don't keep looking back** Gen. 19:17 **the angels ordered, "Run for your lives! And don't look back or stop anywhere in the valley! Escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away!"** 24-26 **Then the Lord rained down fire and burning sulfur from the sky on Sodom and Gomorrah. 25 He utterly destroyed them ...26 But Lot's wife looked back as she was following behind him, and she turned into a pillar of salt.** Lot and his family were warned not to look back because there would be consequences, but his wife didn't obey and became a symbol of indecision. She represents many people today who want everything from God, but at the same time all that the world and sin offers; they keep looking back.

In Luke 17: 32-33 Jesus urged his disciples not to follow the example of Lot's wife: **Remember what happened to Lot's wife! If you cling to your life, you will lose it, and if you let your life go, you will save it.** She died because she was still clinging to her past, she kept looking back.

Give your life to God and you will save it, cling to your own life and you will lose it. Leave your past behind and embrace the future that God has for you. It is not possible to obey God and at the same time take everything with us. Sometimes we will have to leave some things behind and, although it might be difficult, we have to do it to move forward.

Proverbs 4:25-27 teaches us: **Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil.**

Unfortunately, Lot didn't only lose his wife, but also his whole family. He and his daughters went to live in a cave and they got him drunk, slept with him and became pregnant. These girls came out of Sodom, but the sin of Sodom had not come out of them. Lot loses everything because he never had an altar for God in his life and didn't seek His direction. Let's not repeat the same errors in our own lives!

**Conclusion** – In Mathew 11:23-24 Jesus warns us that God will judge more harshly those who know him but don't have an altar for him in their lives and therefore ignore him. He will judge more harshly those who live life at their own pace, who only make partial commitments, who don't abandon their sin and keep looking back, who claim to believe in him and still commit the same sins of Sodom: sexual immorality, pride, gluttony, laziness, and selfishness.

There is good news today! If you want to be saved and have a life that thrives, you just have to ask Jesus forgiveness for your sins. Do more than believing, and make a total commitment to Him.

The other good news is that if we follow the steps present today we 'll prevent pain and destruction in our lives and in the lives of others around us.