

Sermon Series – Winning the Battle

Part 7 – “The Tragedy of a Backward Look”

Pastor Dale Campfield - December 11th, 2011

Intro:

Matt 28:19 “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Current Sermon Series: Winning the Battle

Theme Text: 2 Cor 10:5 “Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

Premise of Series: The fact is, as we go out, walking with faith to love others, the enemy is going to do everything possible to keep us from achieving the goal of making an IMPACT – reaching souls in the path of our lives for the Kingdom of God; Loving, growing and serving; he devil will throw everything he possibly can at you to keep you defeated, depressed and distracted. That is why it is of utmost importance that we bring every thought that we have into captivity in order to walk in obedience to Christ.

The Lord is known by many names in the Bible and His names reveal His character.

’Baal- Perazim’ (2 Samuel 5:17-20) = ’Lord of the Breakthroughs’

Today’s Sermon Title: The Tragedy of a Backward Look

We’ve experienced breakthrough! Now... it’s time to move forward. In this battle of life, we must move forward. As we’ve been set free – we must not go back, and we must not even look back!

The Tragedy of a Backward Look

The mountain of Holiness (the presence of God) is your only safe place of refuge.

TEXT: Genesis 19

Maybe you have heard the story of the two guys that were out hiking in the woods one day when they met up with a hungry bear. The bear started running towards them. The two guys started running but then the one guy stopped, opened up his backpack, pulled off his hiking boots and started putting on running shoes. His friend yelled "What are you doing! Even with those running shoes you can't outrun that bear". He replied "I don't have to outrun the bear. I just have to outrun you!"

Have you ever had to run for your life from something? In the Bible there was another man who had to run for his life, not because of a bear but because the city he was in was about to be destroyed.

Gen. 19:15 With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished." 16 When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the LORD was merciful to them. 17 As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, "Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!" 18 But Lot said to them, "No, my lords, please! 19 Your servant has found favor in your eyes, and you have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can't flee to the mountains; this disaster will overtake me, and I'll die. 20 Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small. Let me flee to it--it is very small, isn't it? Then my life will be spared." 21 He said to him, "Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of. 22 But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it." (That is why the town was called Zoar.) 23 By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. 24 Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah--from the LORD out of the heavens. 25 Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities--and also the vegetation in the land. 26 But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

When Abram and Lot arrived back in Canaan after returning from Egypt they had accumulated such wealth that the land could no longer support both their flocks. Abram gave Lot the opportunity to choose where He would like to go.

Gen 13:10 Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) 11 So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: 12 Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.

Lot chose the Jordan valley because it was well watered and a "garden". It looked like the perfect spot but there was one problem. It was near Sodom. Lot knew that the people of Sodom were very wicked but he still he chose to live there. There are many choices which we face in life which look great from a distance. Like the valley they look great from a human standpoint. The problem is that they are close to Sodom.

Notice that while Lot first pitched his tents NEAR Sodom we see in just the next chapter that he was now living IN Sodom.

Gen 14:11 The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. 12 They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom

The same is true in life. Don't pitch your tents near sin or soon you will be living in it. I have heard stories of people who have been hooked by a variety of addictions. They almost always start by just an 'innocent' act that did not seem like much at the time. Gamblers who started by just putting a quarter in the slot machine. People struggling with pornography from just a glance at something they should not have been looking at. If you play with fire you will be burned. If you mess with the cat you can expect to be scratched. If you play with sin it will destroy you. Stay away from sin in your life!

Last week, we experienced Breakthrough in many different areas of our lives. The last thing you want to do now is look back!

A Burmese Christian tells the following parable: A little banyan seed said to a palm tree one day, "I am weary of being tossed about by the wind; let me lodge in your branches." "Remain as long as you like," was the reply. Soon the tree forgot all about its tiny guest, but the seed did not remain idle. Immediately it began to work its roots under the bark and into the heart of the trunk itself. Finally the tree cried out, "What are you doing?" "I'm only the little seed you allowed to rest among your boughs," came the reply. "Get out!" exclaimed the palm. "You've become too large and strong!" "I cannot leave you now," said the banyan. "We have grown together, and I would kill you if I tore myself away." The tree tried desperately to shake itself loose, but to no avail. Eventually its graceful leaves turned brown, and its trunk wasted away; but the banyan continued to thrive until its host could no longer be found.

You've experienced Breakthrough, forgiveness of sin, been healed, delivered and set free and you feel yourself starting to go back in the negative direction. Maybe you are here and you recognize that you are living too close to Sodom. Run for your life! I believe God is saying 3 things to you today:

1. DON'T HESITATE – get out of that situation NOW

When God tells you to run for your life you had better move WHEN you are told to. The angels came to Lot and warned him of the impending disaster, but Lot hesitated so they grabbed him by the hand and led him out of the city. When the angel said MOVE he meant NOW. The city was going to be destroyed immediately. Lot hears the warning, but hesitated when he understood what that meant.

The same is true in our lives. We find ourselves in places or relationships that are bound for destruction and God says MOVE but we hesitate. We over think it. We start weighing out the pros and cons and we start to rationalize the situation in our minds. Let me ask you a question. Has there ever been a time in your life when God has had to grab you by the hand and drag you

out of a bad situation? I know what that is like. You don't hesitate. You run when you are told to.

Maybe you are here today and you are messing with something you know is wrong and you know that God has told you to move but you are hesitating. Remember the story of Joseph when he was in charge of Potiphar's house. Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. What did Joseph do when tempted?

Gen 39:11-12 One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. 12 She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

When Joseph saw he was in the wrong place at the wrong time he RAN. He didn't try to argue with the wife or discuss the issue in detail, he just ran.

James 1:13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

James says evil thoughts lead to evil actions. It is like having a child, at first the baby is just a single cell but then it quickly grows until it is birthed and grows to adulthood. The key to overcoming temptation is to catch it early. It starts in the mind. If the devil can get your attention then he can get you. You don't fight it. You run. You refocus your attention on something else. Shift your thoughts. The more you fight a feeling, the more it controls you. If you ignore it, you weaken it.

The Bible also tells us to "Flee from the very appearance of evil." **1 Thess. 5:22.**

The Bible does not tell us to resist temptation. It tells us to resist the tempter. There is a big difference. When Jesus was out in the desert and the devil came to tempt him to use his miraculous power for selfish reasons and said, "Why don't you turn these stones to bread?" Jesus does not resist the temptation. He doesn't say, "No thanks, I'm really not that hungry!" He was hungry. Instead he refocuses on God's Words and resists the tempter. The more you fight something the more you focus on it and move towards. The more you say to yourself "don't eat the chocolate cake" the more you focus on CHOCOLATE CAKE!

There is an old story of travelling salesman that went around selling a magic potion that would turn water into gold. There was just one catch. While you followed the detailed instructions you could not think about red monkeys or the potion would not work. Do you think anyone ever was able to do that? The more you say to yourself "don't think about red monkeys" the more you think about red monkeys.

Running from temptation means that you have to run from some situations. There are times you have to get up and turn the TV off. Walk away from the group that's telling the dirty jokes. Leave the party that is serving alcohol. If you don't want to get stung, you have to get away from the bees. Get up and move physically out of the situation.

2. DON'T ARGUE – don't settle for second best

Secondly, when God tells you to run for your life you had better move WHERE you are told to. When Lot and the angels got outside the city they again told him to flee for his life but again he hesitated.

Gen 19:18 But Lot said to them, "No, my lords, please! 19 Your servant has found favor in your eyes, and you have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can't flee to the mountains; this disaster will overtake me, and I'll die. 20 Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small. Let me flee to it -- it is very small, isn't it? Then my life will be spared."

What Lot was really saying here is that he knew the way to safety better than God. Lot was afraid of going to the mountains and instead wanted to go to the nearby town of Zoar. **The word ZOAR in Hebrew means INSIGNIFICANT.**

Lot traded God's perfect plan for insignificance. Often we do the same thing. We substitute God's best in our lives for something much less of our own making. We see in this story that soon after Lot leaves Zoar and goes to the mountains where he had been told to go in the first place. Wouldn't it have been better for him to have just trusted God and gone there in the first place?

Gen 19:30 Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. He and his two daughters lived in a cave.

The same is true for us today. God directs us but we hesitate and want to go our own way thinking that we know the safe path better than Him. Down the road we find out that God's plan was best for us all along. **I have seen so many people run out of one bad relationship right into another. Out of one bad addiction right into another. They trade Sodom for Zoar and end up miserable.**

Good parents want their child to learn from their mistakes. The issue is trust. When God tells you where to go you don't argue – YOU GO THERE. You may question and have doubts about His direction but listen to His will and go where He tells you to.

3. DON'T LOOK BACK – keep your eyes on the finish line

The sad ending of this passage is that Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. We are not told exactly why this happened. We see that Lot reached Zoar before the Lord acted. They were warned not to look back and to go as fast as they could. The New Testament speaks of this as an example of the second coming:

Luke 17:28 "It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. 29 But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 "It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. 31 On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. 32 Remember Lot's wife! 33

Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

The principle is that the second coming of Jesus will be immediate and people will not have time to prepare for it. Lot's wife was overtaken by the disaster because she looked back. I believe the sin of Lot's wife was not the look but the hesitation it represented. How many races have been lost because people lost focus of the finish line and looked back to see how far others were behind them.

Luke 9:61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No-one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Conclusion:

You can't plough looking backward. It just doesn't work. You can't follow Jesus that way either. Maybe you are here today and you are saying "I will follow you Lord; but first let me go ..."

You have heard the saying that if Jesus is not Lord of all then He is not Lord at all. What have you placed before your relationship with Jesus.

Maybe there is an area of your life where you are living too close for comfort with sin. Maybe there is an area where you are already living in Sodom and have been for some time. Listen to the words of God. Get up and run for your life. Now is the time to act. Go wherever God directs you and don't look back. There is a fire that is soon coming. The safest place on earth is in the centre of God's will.

You've experienced Breakthrough – now move forward. Don't go back! And as you do... you watch, you wait, you'll see!

EXTRA NOTES.... *I took the liberty to add these notes to the message in hopes that they might bring some extra insight to your own personal study.*

Neither Lot nor his wife were "bad" individuals compared to the other residents of Sodom - a lethal city of choice for Lot and his family! Compared to the other citizens of Sodom, Lot and his wife, more than likely, seemed to be an extremely fine young couple - meaning that they looked "good" compared to their neighbors. Lot, however, had a serious character flaw - he was a "selfish" man! When Lot and his famous uncle (Abram - soon to receive a new name from Almighty God - soon to be called "Abraham") parted company and went their separate ways, Lot chose the best land for himself and his family! Check it out for yourself!

In Genesis 13:10-13 (NLT), we read these words: "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. (This was before the Lord had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) (vs. 11) Lot chose the 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. (vs.

12) So while Abram stayed in the land of Canaan, Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom, among the cities of the plain. (vs. 13) The people of this area were unusually wicked and sinned greatly against the Lord."

More than likely, Lot, when he saw this magnificent landscape, thought to himself - "WOW" - would you just look at this place - with its hassle-free gardening - nothing like what my unfortunate ancestor, Adam, had experienced - you have to know that I want this land for myself! Uncle Abram this land is my land!" So it was written and so it was done! The land was good - however, the people were not good; and, knowing this fact from the very outset, Lot deliberately chose to dwell among such a people - people who flaunted their sins in the face of Almighty God! I'm reminded of the old adage, "If you lay down with dogs, you get up with fleas."

The sins of these citizens of Sodom were so horrible that the name of their city - Sodom - has become a noun, in our modern-day language, that means, in one sense of the word - "perverted sex" called "Sodomy" - and the word sodomites being applied to those who engage in such evil! What a detestable thought - however, we'll simply leave that alone for now - time constraints and a mixed congregation preventing me from going into any further details about that subject matter!

My Holy Bible, the written word of Almighty God, tells me that Lot pitched his tents near "sinful" Sodom, knowing full well the terrible reputation that the city had - however, despite that reputation, Sodom was a city of great opportunity and easy riches! Lot soon found himself drawing closer and closer to the "easy money" until one sad day, he found himself living within the city walls of this wicked place - living in a lavish custom-built residence - fully immersed and assimilated into the everyday affairs of his adopted home! Lot, however, was completely and totally unaware that disaster was lying just around the corner!

Going back to Lot's uncle, Abram, for a moment, we find Abram attempting to avert the forthcoming disaster by playing "auctioneer" with Almighty God. Abram pleaded with Almighty God to reconsider his plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah! You see, my brothers and sisters, Almighty God had clued Abram in on his plan early on - hence the bidding process!

Abram said to Almighty God, "What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Would you spare the place then?" Almighty God agreed to spare Sodom and Gomorrah. Unable to find fifty righteous people, Abram began to act like an "auctioneer in reverse" and negotiate the deal down - "Do I hear forty-five?" "Do I hear forty?" "Do I hear thirty?" "Do I hear twenty?" It was crystal clear, by this time, that Abram knew there was only one family, in all of Sodom, that was worth saving - the family of his "greedy" nephew, Lot - his wife and his children!

Armed with this new knowledge, Abram brokered a new deal with Almighty God, saying to Him, "What if only ten can be found there, will you still spare the city?" By this time, I believe Almighty God got tired of playing the "Auctioneer Game" - why? Because we find Almighty God saying to Abram, in effect, "I will be merciful to all of Sodom for the sake of only ten" and, "That's My Final Answer!"

Now, talk about unimaginable grace - Almighty God valued even the "imperfect" Lot, to such a degree, that He was able to agree with his uncle, Abram, to spare Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of ten righteous people! Sodom and Gomorrah - the twin cities of evil - like our twin cities of good - Minneapolis and St. Paul - were thought of as one place - hence the mention, at times, of only Sodom when the actuality is both places! There are two (2) important truths concerning Almighty God that come leaping forth out of the Scriptural pages of this ancient story:

1. The inseparable twins - "Grace and Mercy" - of Almighty God stretches even further than you and I could ever imagine or dream possible!

2. Almighty God is withholding "fire and brimstone" - even now - for your sake and my sake - why? Just so we can let a "lost and dying world" to know that judgment awaits them - just like it did Sodom and Gomorrah!

My Holy Bible tells me that two (2) angels arrived at the city gates of Sodom, while Lot was sitting at the entrance - perhaps, still trying to locate those ten (10) righteous people - we do not know for sure - why? Because the Holy Bible does not tell us what Lot was doing sitting at the entrance - sitting in the gateway - sitting in the place where the civic leaders would meet - sitting in a place of honor and leadership - in a city with dishonor and a lack of leadership! Life among the citizens of Sodom had clearly lined Lot's pockets - as well as those pockets of his wife's garments - with wealth - "filthy lucre" - a factor that coated the walls of their hearts - preventing the truth of Almighty God from piercing and convicting their souls!

Before the imminent disaster, Lot and his family would be placed in the position of deciding or choosing whether or not they could leave all of that wealth and power - whether or not they could just walk away from it all - departing with only the clothes on their backs! There's is no question, whatsoever, that Lot's wife enjoyed her husband's prosperity and position within the hierarchy of the city's leadership - in point of fact, more than likely it was his wife that propelled Lot along the "crooked pathway" toward affluence and spiritual apathy (that "comfort zone") in the first place!

Not a single word from the lips of Lot's wife can be found anywhere in the written Word of Almighty God! - The Holy Bible does, however, give us a glimpse or peek into the character of her husband, Lot - thereby allowing us to safely conclude a few things about Mrs. Lot - why? Because they were married long enough to have two (2) grown daughters and therefore, given the many clues that we have concerning her husband's character, we can safely assume a few things in this regard:

To begin with, let's look at what Lot did when these two (2) angelic gatecrashers appeared at the entrance to the city of Sodom! My Holy Bible tells me, in Genesis 19:1 (NLT): "...When he saw them, he stood up to meet them. Then he welcomed them and bowed low to the ground." These two (2) angels, whom I might add appeared to Lot as mere men, were strangers to Lot - however, just perhaps, they appeared to be "quality" folks - perhaps, they had a commanding stature or were finely attired - perhaps, they had a regal demeanor - we don't know because the Holy Bible does not tell us - but, what the Word of Almighty God does say is that something made Lot stand up to greet them and, then, subsequently bow low to the ground!

In Genesis 19:2 (NLT), we find Lot - the "Hospitality King" offering to open up his home to these ancient desert travelers - we find the "Grand Opening" celebration of Lot's version of a "bed and breakfast" taking place! The two (2) angels, however, are reluctant to try the new establishment - offering, instead, to spend the night in the city square! The smooth-talking "sales pitch" of Lot, however, finally persuades the two (2) angels to go home with him! So, we see that Lot was a persuasive individual - a man skilled at using words to achieve his own ends - why? Because he altered the plans of - not one, but two - angels - heavenly beings! Now, that surely takes some skill at persuasion!

While we are at it, there is a lesson here for us menfolk who desire to bring home a surprise house guest - without notifying our wives first - expecting to provide our house guest with a meal! Why do you say that, preacher? I say it because in Genesis 19:3 (KJV), we read: "...and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat." Whoops, there it is, did you see it? My Holy Bible tells me that Lot made the feast and baked the bread - nothing in there about Lot's wife laboring for the repast! One can only assume, for the Holy Bible does not tell us, that Lot's wife was clearly upset, as any housewife would be, and in a fit of pique said, in effect, "You brought them - you feed them"!

After the meal, and prior to retiring for the night, we discover in the Word, that a delegation arrived at Lot's house - a delegation consisting of all the men of the city of Sodom - both young and old - from every quarter! And, to be sure, this was no "Welcome Wagon" crew bringing a box of groceries and household supplies to these "out-of-town" visitors - nor was it a "Prayer Circle" gathering at Lot's house! This delegation had an evil intent - a vile purpose - when they came knock, knock, knocking at Lot's door! - Listen to the words of the delegation, as we eavesdrop on their conversation, found in Genesis 19:5 (KJV): "...Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them." This was clearly a reference to a "sexual encounter" and not to know them in the normal sense of the word!

Lot had a real dilemma here - and, to protect his family from the filthy suggestions that were coming from this delegation of men, Lot stepped out of his house - closing the door behind him! Then, Lot, proceeded to say to them, "I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly." It would appear, by his actions, that Lot is an honorable man in this horrible situation; however, do not jump to any hasty conclusions - do not rush to an opinion just yet - why? Because in the very next breath, we find Lot telling these men - whom he has just referred to as "his brothers" - "Look here, I have two daughters which have not known man - in other words, they were virgins - do ye unto them as is good in your eyes! only unto these men do nothing; for they have come under the protection of my roof!"

Now, it was crystal clear to the most casual observer that these so-called "brothers" of Lot wanted to do some "unspeakable stuff" and here was "good old Dad" offering his two (2) virginal daughters to every single male in the city to do with as they pleased! So much for "fatherly love" - so much for the value of women - so much for virginal daughters - in the mind of Lot!

I grant you, my brothers and sisters, that the rules of hospitality in biblical times required that a host protect his house guests at all costs - but, tell me, did that cost include such a thing as

abusing one's own children? Obviously, Almighty God saw something of value in Lot that was worth saving - however, at this point in time, I am having a very hard time trying to see what that is - but, then I remember that Almighty God said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts and my ways are not your ways!"

But, back to our story! As time passed, we find that an "angry mob mentality" takes over the delegation of men and we find the crowd threatening Lot and pressing forward to break down the door of his home - surely, Lot by this time must be fearful for his own life - despite the fact, that earlier, he had shown no such thought for the safety of his two (2) virginal daughters! As things begin to get uglier, we find that the Word of Almighty God tells us that the two (2) angelic angels snatch Lot into the house and close the door!

Once again, despite his "imperfections", we find Lot experiencing the inseparable twins of Almighty God - "Grace and Mercy"! As undeserving as Lot is, his two (2) virginal daughters - his wife (who by the way still has not spoken a word - nor will she) - and himself - find themselves being rescued by these two (2) angelic "heroes" who, I might add, have now smote the men that were at the door with blindness! Apparently the angels, for a split second, abandoned their human disguise and allowed their dazzling brightness to blind the men outside - much like the glare of the hot sun blinds us when it falls upon the fresh-fallen snow!

In Genesis 19:12-13 (NLT), we find the angels asking Lot: "Do you have any other relatives here in the city? Get them out of this place - sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone else. (vs. 13) For we will destroy the city completely. The stench of the place has reached the Lord, and he has sent us to destroy it." The last time that Almighty God had destroyed the earth, He had flooded every inch of it with water. Lot knew that the patience of Almighty God was an awesome thing; however, he also knew that Almighty God's patience was not an endless proposition! In Genesis 19:14 (NLT), we, therefore, read: "So Lot rushed out to tell his daughters' fiances, 'Quick, get out of the city! The Lord is going to destroy it.' But the young men thought he was only joking." How about you, my brothers and sisters, do you think it is a joke? - or, like myself, can you smell the smoke or sulphur in the air!

Before we proceed any further with this story, however, we need to take a moment to notice this tiny little factor - Lot had allowed his two (2) virginal daughters to become betrothed to men of the city of Sodom - making his earlier projected use of them even more despicable! Lot had allowed his daughters to have a future of being unequally yoked - the righteous to the unrighteous! Lot may not have been born in Sodom; however, it would appear that he was as close to being a Sodomite as anyone could ever get without actually being birthed there - his birth certificate might as well have recorded that he was born there!

Yet, in Genesis 19:15-16 (NLT), we read these words: "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.'" It is here, at this point in time, that we find the first mention of Lot's wife! The very next thing that we know is this: The two (2) angels have snatched Lot, his wife, and his two (2) daughters up and taken them to safety outside the city walls."

Once again, those inseparable twins of Almighty God - "Grace and Mercy" make their appearance in Lot's life and intervene in his circumstances! Apparently Lot and his wife had hesitated when the angels became insistent that they leave hurriedly! More than likely, they were having a hard time deciding what "stuff" they wanted to carry or take with them! Listen to what the angels say to them, after getting them to safety despite themselves: "Run for your lives!" the angels warned. "Do not stop anywhere in the valley. And don't look back! Escape to the mountains, or you will die." It's in the Book, you can find it in Genesis 19:17 (NLT)!

But, check this out, if you will! Lot still wanted to argue with the angels - it would certainly appear that the message the angels were trying to pass on to Lot was falling on deaf ears - the folks just didn't seem to get it - they did not appear to sense the urgency with which the angels were telling them to hurry and flee - remember, these patient angels were getting ready to light some "Holy Fires" - and, believe me, their patience was running thin, because they found themselves having to stop or delay their task because of Lot and his family's reluctance to speedily depart the area! I can just imagine the angels telling them words to this effect: "What part of hurry and flee do you not understand?" Do you doubt my version of it?

Listen to the words found in Genesis 19:19-20 (NLT): "You have been so kind to me and saved my life, and you have granted me such mercy. But I cannot go to the mountains. Disaster would catch up to me there, and I would soon die. (vs. 20) See, there is a small village nearby. Please let me go there instead; don't you see how small it is? Then my life will be saved."

Here, we find Lot sounding like a "used car salesman" saying, in effect, "Don't worry about that little village over there! It's not worth looking at - let me and my family go there!" Talk about a disaster - Lot was getting ready to experience the greatest disaster that mankind had ever seen since the flood, yet he wanted to negotiate with the angels!

Now, understand this, Lot was not concerned with the people in that little village - it wasn't them that he was trying to protect! Lot was concerned with his own "self" once again! You see, my brothers and sisters, it was a long, hard haul up that mountainside - and, if he could just get the angels to let him stay there, in that little village, instead, life would be easier for him! The name of the village was Zoar, which means "little" - just as Lot had described it to the angels! The two angels agreed and just as the sun began to rise, Lot and his family reached the village! Then, my brothers and sisters, the firestorm came and the disaster began! It is here, at this point in our story, that Lot's wife changes from a "dash of salt" into a "pillar of salt"! For we read, in Genesis 19:26 (NLT): "But Lot's wife looked back as she was following along behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."

In closing, Matthew 5:13 (KJV), records Jesus, the Christ, telling us: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Lot's wife was no longer a human being - she was no longer a "living soul" - she was no longer a pillar of the community - instead, she was a pillar of salt!