

# The Influence of Sodom

**Introduction.** Genesis 13:12 says, “Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom.” Lot chose what was good for his livestock rather than what was good for his family (Genesis 13:5-12).

The wickedness in Sodom was exceedingly great (Genesis 13:13; 19:2-5, 9-11). But God would have spared Sodom and Gomorrah if only a few righteous people could’ve been found (Genesis 18:22-33). Thus, Abraham lowered the number 50 to 45, and then to 40, 30, 20, and 10. Sadly, not even ten righteous people could be found.

Not only did Lot’s family live in Sodom, but Sodom lived in Lot’s family. The influence of Sodom was devastating, and we need to investigate its power.

## ***I. It Caused Respect for Parents to Decline***

- A. It’s evident that the sons-in-law didn’t hold Lot in high regard (Genesis 19:14).
  - 1. They didn’t take the older and wiser Lot seriously. The sons of Eli did the same (1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-25).
  - 2. If they would’ve had proper respect for Lot, they wouldn’t have been consumed in the fire and brimstone.
- B. When Sodom (or the world) lives in one’s heart today, respect for parents and the elderly declines.
  - 1. We’re living in an evil time when a lot of disrespect is shown toward parents and adults in general (Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20).
  - 2. In a poll of 504 principals attending the National Association of School Principals’ Convention in Orlando, FL, 89% said they faced profane language and provocative insults toward teachers or other students on a regular basis (USA Today, 3/11/97, p. 6).
  - 3. God has ordered respect for the elderly (Leviticus 19:32; 2 Kings 2:23-25; cp. Proverbs 1:8).
    - a) For children, the parent’s word is final, whether it be concerning friends, sports, dates, curfew, or attending the assemblies.
    - b) For parents, make your training and discipline even-handed and fair. Young people will learn to respect as they trust that you have their best interests at heart in your discipline.

## ***II. It Caused a Reluctance to Flee Evil***

- A. The angels had to lead Lot and his family by the hand out of Sodom (Genesis 19:15-16).
  - 1. Remember, they were leaving behind lewd homosexuality, ruthless behavior, and complete unrighteousness (2 Peter 2:6-9).
  - 2. You’d think Lot and his family would’ve been “long gone” before now. Furthermore, when the angel commanded them to leave, you’d think they would’ve rejoiced and quickly left.
  - 3. The influence of Sodom apparently hindered them. Walt Kelly wrote, “We have met the enemy and he is us.”
- B. Today, Christians are commanded to flee ungodliness (1 Corinthians 6:17-18; 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22).

1. Evil takes many forms and several places in the New Testament define evil for us (Matthew 15:19; Romans 1:29-31; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 2 Corinthians 12:20-21; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-5; Colossians 3:5; 1 Timothy 1:8-10; 2 Timothy 3:2-4; Revelation 9:21; 21:8).
2. We need to run from evil — not coddle, embrace, or play around with it.
  - a) When Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce Joseph, he said, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:1-12).
  - b) When need to, like the psalmist, hate every false way (Psalm 119:104, 128) and hate the garment polluted by the flesh (Jude 23).

### ***III. It Caused Fear to Reign in Place of Faith***

- A. The angels told Lot and his family to escape to the mountains, but incredibly, Lot was too afraid (Genesis 19:17-22). Later, he was afraid to dwell in Zoar, and went to the mountains (Genesis 19:30).
- B. The influences of the world encourage and breed fear.
  1. God doesn’t give the spirit of fear to His people (2 Timothy 1:7). Paul wasn’t ashamed of the gospel (Romans 1:16-17; 2 Timothy 1:12). The fearful face a fearful end (Revelation 21:8).
  2. During World War II, a military governor met with General George Patton in Sicily. When he praised Patton highly for his courage and bravery, the general replied, “Sir, I’m not a brave man — the truth is, I’m an utter craven coward. I’ve never been within the sound of gunshot or in sight of battle in my whole life that I wasn’t so scared that I had sweat in the palms of my hands.” Years later, when Patton’s autobiography was published, it contained this significant statement by the general: “I learned very early in my life never to take counsel of my fears.”
  3. Fear can manifest in many ways:
    - a) Fear to talk to neighbors about salvation.
    - b) Fear to correct brethren when needed.
    - c) Fear to overcome ridicule.
    - d) Fear to take an active part in church work.
    - e) Fear to stand for truth.
  4. Let’s not take counsel of our fears — dwelling on them continually — but trust in the living God who, through His glorious Scriptures, replaces fear with wisdom and power.

### ***IV. It Caused a Yearning for the Earthly***

- A. The command was, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you ...” (Genesis 19:17). The influence of Sodom caused the yearnings for the earthly to be stronger than the willingness to obey (1 John 2:15; cp. Matthew 26:41).
  1. Lot’s wife may have looked back out of curiosity; that is, because she wanted to see the demonstration of God’s wrath on those wicked cities.
  2. Lot’s wife may have looked back because she had ties and interests in Sodom. Like the rich young ruler, no doubt, she hated to leave behind all her worldly possessions. She wasn’t given time to pack.

3. Lot's wife may have looked back because she thought, "If I look back and see if the cities are really being destroyed. If not, I'll go back to Sodom."
- B. Her looking back was a sign of unbelief — doubting that God would do what He said (Luke 17:32). Whatever the reason for her looking back, when she disobeyed, God turned her into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26).
- C. The Lord had said, "Don't look back."
  1. God said to Adam and Eve: "Don't eat" (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:23-24).
  2. God said to Uzzah: "Don't touch" (Numbers 4:15; 2 Samuel 6:6-7).
  3. God says to us: "Don't forsake" (Hebrews 10:25-27).
    - a) We like to think that we can disobey God and still get by, but we can't.
    - b) God is to be revered (Hebrews 10:28-31; 12:28-29). We tend to beg people into obedience, but we'd better fear Him (Matthew 10:28).

#### ***V. It Caused Immorality to Take Root***

- A. The influence of Sodom was still very much in the hearts of Lot's daughters, even though the city itself had been destroyed (Genesis 19:30-38).
  1. No doubt they, along with their father, had seen and heard the filthy conduct of the wicked, and its influence had rubbed off on them (Proverbs 6:27).
  2. They had been so influenced by Sodom that fornication was no longer evil to them. Instead of committing adultery with their father, they could've gone back to be with Abraham and his household and found men there to marry.
  3. It takes great determination to recognize that there's always an alternative to sin. Lot's daughters didn't have to commit incest.
- B. In similar fashion, one can't feed his mind on the garbage of this world without consequences.
  1. In describing one of the movies of his day, a critic wrote, "The plot moves rapidly down the sewer." He adds, "It wouldn't be so damaging to those who watch such trash if the mind could be equipped, like your kitchen sink, with a garbage disposal. Then, you could flush away all the filth and be done with it, but the mind doesn't work that way. It stores up impressions for a lifetime. The only way to protect the mind is to expose it to only the best."
  2. Certainly, if one is so inclined, there's a mountain of garbage he can focus his mind on today by many, many means (cp. Matthew 6:22-23; Luke 11:34-36). Instead, because the heart defines us (Proverbs 4:23), think holy, righteous, and spiritual thoughts (Philippians 4:8; cp. Joshua 1:8; Psalm 19:14).

**Conclusion.** On one hand, it wasn't a sin for Lot and his family to live in Sodom. The sin came when Sodom started living in them. Jesus said that His disciples were in the world, but they weren't of the world (John 17:11-15). We must live in this world, but the world must not live in us. Let's not be conformed to the world (Romans 12:1-2).

On the other hand, the question remains of what we do with the culture. We can complain about it, but that's not ultimately the best cure (in fact, it's not much of a cure at all). We're all exhausted by the wickedness, division, and anger that characterizes culture today. It's pretty clear that some in this culture are tired too, but they don't know quite how to escape. A generation tired of hate, yet caught in its grip, will only be released from it if there's a clear alternative. This is where the church can help.

An exhausted culture needs an alternative to itself, not an echo of itself. Authentic, grace-filled, hope-bearing, truthful people are what our friends and neighbors need. Hope counters hate better than hate counters hate. And hope is what the church, at its best, offers.

This is not hope in a candidate, or in a political party — but hope in Christ, someone in the world who also transcends the world. In churches all over this land, love needs to surge, hope needs fueling, and Christians need to focus on what can unite people, not on what can divide people. Let's be the help and hope, not the hate. That's a mission worth getting behind, and an influence that can draw all men.