

In the name of our gracious and loving God. Amen.

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!”

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.

²⁷ Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the LORD. ²⁸ He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.

²⁹ So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived. **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Recipients of God’s grace and love,

A little over 17 years ago I was living in Sleepy Eye, MN with my family while I attended MLC and studied for the public ministry. A few days before Christmas we decided to visit an aunt and uncle in the Twin Cities. It started out as a nice day but as we were returning to Sleepy Eye the snow started to fall. It got worse and worse until it became almost impossible to see the road. In hindsight we should have stopped for the night in New Ulm but for some reason I decided to keep going. Maybe I was too cheap to get a hotel room or maybe it was a little bit of prideful thinking that nothing was going to stop me or a desire to sleep in my own bed – whatever the reason, I made a decision to keep going and it was a bad decision.

As we continued down the road we saw a lot of vehicles in the ditch. Most of them looked deserted but about half way to Sleepy Eye we saw a vehicle with people in it and so we stopped to see if they needed any help. They had called a tow truck and it was on its way from Sleepy Eye. Sure enough we could see lights coming our way in the distance. The vehicle coming towards us wasn’t a tow truck, but rather a county sheriff. We were happy to see him because now we had some tire tracks to follow to town and didn’t have to worry about getting stranded in that terrible storm. There is no doubt in my kind that God delivered us from trouble that night and kept us safe in spite of our poor choices.

As we consider the story of Lot before us today, we can see a story of deliverance, **“God’s Amazing Deliverance from Destruction,”** for Lot and his family. May this portion of God’s Word help us to **“Leave behind the influences of this world,”** and to pay more attention as we, **“Listen to the Promises of our Savior.”**

I. Lot was the nephew of Abraham and when God called Abraham to go to a land he would show him Lot went along. God blessed Abraham and made him a wealthy man – which in that day was measured by the amount of livestock and servants he had. Since Lot was with Abraham, God blessed him as well, but the land couldn’t support them both so they had to part ways. Abraham gave Lot the choice of land and he chose to settle in the plain by the city of Sodom.

This might have seemed a good choice from a business point of view but from a spiritual point of view it was terrible. Sodom was a city where people indulged in all the wrong things. The sins of the city were excessive in every way, especially sexual sins, and it was very apparent that this was a city of unbelievers.

Maybe Lot thought he could resist the temptations of the city. Maybe he thought he could even be a good influence but over time we see the words of Paul ring true, **“Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”** (1 Corinthians 15:33). That became evident when these two “strangers” showed up in town. These two strangers were angels sent to rescue Lot and his family before God destroyed the city of Sodom. Lot saw them come into town and knew they were special and he took them in but it wasn’t long before we see how far Lot had sunk.

That evening the men of the city came to Lot’s house demanding he send out these two “strangers” so they could have sex with them. Instead of rebuking the crowd for their shameful lust, Lot offered to send out his two virgin daughters instead. Living in Sodom had obviously dulled Lot’s moral compass.

Lot got himself into this situation because he had made a poor decision about where to live and when he saw the immorality of the residents he still chose to stay and raise his family there. Maybe the thought of more money influenced this decision – we don’t know for sure but as Lot chose Sodom as his home he was separating himself from a regular worship life and growing more distant from God. I’d like to think I’m not like Lot but how often don’t we make poor choices for all the wrong reasons and we don’t always see it as a poor choice .

Sometimes it's our choice of friends – we might chose friends who are a bad influence; much like the people of Sodom were on Lot and his family. And when someone points it out, we don't want to make changes. Maybe we chose a job that takes us on the road all the time. The money is good but we never get to see our family and church is a thing of the past. Maybe we chose the wrong kinds of movies – the language is bad and there's a lot of sexual content. We might cringe a little bit the first few bad words but after a while we become callous towards what we see and hear and after a while we consider what we see in the movies to be normal. Maybe we chose not to go to the doctor – they are only going to tell you something you don't want to hear and so your health deteriorates to a point where you end up in the hospital. The list could go on and on. We all make choices that might seem right at the time but they don't turn out that way.

So how do we make good choices – God pleasing choices? Listen to God speak to you through his Word. There is a lot of practical advice he has for us about many different areas of our lives but as you make choices especially consider, “Will this strengthen or weaken my faith?” “Will this give glory to God or would I rather try and hide this from God?” “Will this be a good witness of my faith or will people think I have no faith?” And when we make a poor choice and we realize it, ask God for forgiveness and deliverance. After all God sent his Son in spite of our poor choices to pay for our sins and he reminds us that, **“He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”** (1 John 1:9)

II. The angels came to rescue Lot because of Abraham's prayer and God's grace and mercy. In a way, this was Lot's call to repentance – a time to turn from this way of life and to turn to God. The message of the angels was pretty clear, **“Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished.”** And yet Lot hesitated. He was used to this lifestyle and this was his home, but the angels grabbed him and his daughters and his wife and pulled them out of the city warning them not to look back. In other words, leave this life behind and listen to God's message.

God is patient but how many chances is he going to give us? The family hesitated once but when Lot's wife looked back with longing eyes her actions indicated that her life in Sodom was more important than God's message. This was a time of judgment and she was judged along with the people she did not want to leave.

God's judgment was complete. No one and nothing in the city of Sodom survived. It was completely destroyed. Abraham could see the evidence as he looked out over the plain and yet

God spared Abraham's nephew because God is gracious and merciful and he listened to and answered Abraham's prayer.

Unfortunately Lot and his daughters did not follow the Lord. The influence of Sodom was hard to let go and they continued in a sinful lifestyle. You can continue to read the account in Genesis. Lot's offspring became the Moabites and the Ammonites – nations who were hostile towards God's people.

As we think about Lot and his family we have to consider what influences us the most as we live our lives? Are we looking to the world, our friends, our parents or are we looking to God? Hopefully our friends and parents help us and encourage us to look to God, but there are times when our sinful nature pulls us towards the influence of the world around us.

It's hard to hold onto heaven's treasure's and the world's trash at the same time. Lot couldn't do it and Satan works hard to make us long for the things of this world – to chase after the best car and the most expensive house and all the newest toys and gadgets. He works hard to get us friends that aren't the best influence or to get us obsessed with the internet or our hobbies or anything that can push God further and further out of our lives. Yet there is only one treasure that brings true peace and contentment and that is the treasure of faith in Jesus our Savior.

Knowing Jesus as your Savior and holding onto the cross where he paid for your sins and trusting him to guide you and to help you make wise choices is what counts.

Life is full of choices and sometimes it is hard to make the right one but with God in your life and his Word to guide you it becomes easier. He helps us to set aside pride and he helps us to focus on what's most important. And when we make a poor choice he brings us forgiveness and helps us to pick up the pieces. And when you see a friend or relative make a poor choice talk to them and pray for them. Remember how God answered Abraham's prayer by sending angels to save Lot and his family. We have a powerful God who can do more than we imagine and we have a gracious God who loves us and is merciful to us. May we always keep Jesus in our hearts and listen to him as he guides us and as he showers his grace and mercy on us. Amen.