

Lot's City: Unbridled Sensuality

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Introduction: Lot's City Serves as a Warning to Others.

“So Abram went from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold” (Genesis 13:1-2).

And we go down to verse eight.

‘So Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. Is not the whole land before you? Let’s part company. If you go to the left, I’ll go to the right; if you go to the right, I’ll go to the left.”

‘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, towards Zoar. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out towards the east. The two men parted company: Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD’ (Genesis 13:8-13).

Turn with me, if you would, to 2 Peter chapter two, 2 Peter chapter two—page 1895 -- getting it in context, verse four. “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell...” (2 Peter 2:4) Literally, consigned them to Tartaros—Tartaros was the abode of the Titans in Greek mythology. It was the place where those amazing, powerful giants were consigned. IT is interesting that Peter uses a verbal form of that Greek word Tartaros. It should not be translated hell.

“... Putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was

tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) -- if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority” (2 Peter 2:4-10).

This is an odd picture. It is a picture of a sinking ship and it is entitled “Mistakes.” It could be that the purpose of your life is only to serve as a warning to others. It is kind of a joke, a cynical joke, and yet I submit to you that the majority of the people we encounter in this week’s and next week’s sermon would find that that is true of them, that the whole purpose of their lives was only to serve as a warning to others. May God grant that not be true of any of us here.

You see, that is what Peter writes in 2 Peter chapter two on page 1895 where he tells us that, in verse six, that God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly.

If we want to understand this Bible character Lot we have to understand the city where he came to live. For I submit to you—as we will see this morning—we, ourselves, are not unlike Lot. The city in which we find ourselves is quickly becoming a city like that of Lot.

I. Ezekiel 16 Expands on the Story Of Lot.

Turn with me, if you will, to Ezekiel chapter 16, Ezekiel chapter 16. Sodom came throughout the annals of history to be known as the quintessential example of a place that, in rebellion against God, was given over to wickedness and to destruction. But we are apt to miss what really went on in Sodom if we have never read Ezekiel 16.

By the way, a new year is a good time to begin reading through the Bible. You can read one chapter of the Bible a day and read through the Bible in roughly three and a half years. I imagine that most people here have never read Ezekiel chapter 16 or Ezekiel chapter 23. These two chapters are very lewd chapters with filthy descriptions of the people of God who are compared to two sluts.

In Ezekiel 16 this orphan is rescued by God, who later marries her, and then she becomes an adulteress. In Ezekiel chapter 23 the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom are compared to two sisters. The northern kingdom, Israel, set up its own worship. Jeroboam I in 931 BC set up a rival religious institution. He set up his own tent to worship God, worshipping the true God, but after his own imagination whereas God set up his own tent in Jerusalem in the south.

And so the two sisters are called, in Hebrew, Oholah—that is the name of the northern kingdom. She is compared to a skanky girl who is named, “her tent.” Oholah in Hebrew means “her tent.” Whereas the southern kingdom, Jerusalem, which did have God’s tent, the temple, is called Ohoibah, “my tent is in her.”

But these two girls are crude, course, lascivious girls. How insulting it must have been, then, when the prophet Ezekiel, who was—had he been living in Jerusalem instead of in captivity in Babylon—would have been ordained a priest when he was called to be a prophet. When he tells the people of Jerusalem these words—page 1306 -- Ezekiel 16, verse 46, Ezekiel 16, verse 46. “Your older sister was Samaria, who lived to the north of you with her daughters; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you with her daughters, was Sodom” (Ezekiel 16:46).

How offensively these words were received by Ezekiel’s congregation.

“You are saying we are kin to the Sodomites?”

You see how the word Sodom and sodomite have come in our language even before English to be the mark of decadence and destruction—how insulting to be told that we are kin to the people of Sodom.

Jesus, you know, said the same thing when he was speaking to a religious group of people who were outwardly righteous, but inwardly far from God. And in the gospels he tells the people of the Galilee, “It will more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than it will be for you” (Matthew 10:15).

Isn’t that an amazing thought? Could it be that religious people, people like us, would find that we have a harder time on the day of judgment than the

people of Sodom and Gomorrah? For to whom much is given, much will be required. We have much light and we have sinned against the light.

And he goes on and he says in verse 47 of Ezekiel 16, “You not only walked in their ways and copied their detestable practices, but in all your ways you soon became more depraved than they” (Ezekiel 16:47). How those words must have stung the Jewish people, many of whom had already been sent into captivity even though the temple was still standing when Ezekiel wrote these words.

Verse 48. “As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, your sister Sodom and her daughters never did what you and your daughters have done.”

So what is the sin of Sodom? What is sodomy according to biblical revelation? Here it is. “Now, this was the sin of your sister Sodom” (Ezekiel 16:49). There are six things that are mentioned. We do well to note them. “She and her daughters were arrogant” (Ezekiel 16:49).

I. A. They Were Arrogant, Living Life in Indifference to God.

What is arrogance? Arrogance is living our lives in defiance of God, living our lives without the fear of God. You know, the fear of God is an important thing in Scripture. The fear of God gives us wisdom. It gives us knowledge and without the fear of God people throw off restraint. Arrogant people are people who have no humility. They are people who live their lives in independence of God. Isn't that what original sin is? “You will be as God determining for yourselves good and evil, experiencing for yourselves good and evil” (cf. Genesis 3:5).

I. B. They Enjoyed Great Material Abundance.

We notice something else. They were overfed. Actually, they weren't overfed. That isn't what it says in Hebrew. It says in Hebrew that they had abundance of bread. It doesn't say anything in terms their waistline or whether they were given to gluttony. It says that they had tremendous material abundance.

I have been to Sodom. I have walked out into the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea now covers that part of the world. It is hard to imagine as you walk down a

rocky road in a waste, howling wilderness and set foot into this very thick, oily feeling body of water, to imagine that at one time it was a place of lush vegetation, tremendous prosperity, flocks and herds, abundance of fruit and beautiful fresh water. It is hard to imagine that as you walk out and find that your feet go out from under you as you walk out only a small distance because it makes everything so buoyant that you can't stand. You float.

But it was once a lush place, this place called Sodom. It was a place of incredible material abundance. There was always food in the pantry that reinforced their arrogance and independence of God. Hungry people are desperate people. Hungry people are people who realize how dependent they are on divine provision. But people who have a black line in their bank accounts, who are ready for retirement, people whose pantries are well stocked only have their arrogance reinforced.

I. C. Their Lives Were Marked By Ease and Indifference.

There is a third thing that we notice here. They were unconcerned. That particular word can be translated "ease." In their indifference to those around them, in their indifference to God, they were in pursuit of happiness as luxury and leisure time. These people who had such tremendous material prosperity used their material prosperity in the pursuit of luxury, in the pursuit of idleness. They lived for the weekend. They lived for retirement.

How opposite the biblical ideal, dear ones. Never forget. I hope you see this pattern in these biblical characters that are in defiance of God. Each of them in one way or another takes us back to Eden without God.

"We can live in paradise without God."

That was Nimrod's dream.

"We can have the Garden of Eden here and now. We can be free from poverty. We can be free from war. We can do it without God."

And those in Sodom and Gomorrah wanted what Man knew in Eden: no frustration, no wearisome toil, only leisure time, fun, activity, amusement, the alpha privative, a, "no," "no musing," amusement, no musing, no thinking, no pondering, no reflection. Drown it out. Don't think. Drown it out with music. Drown it out with television. Drown it out with films.

Drown it out with psychotropic drugs. Drown it out with alcohol. One thing after another after another—that is the picture, amusement.

And so we find here an arrogance. We find here tremendous material abundance and we find here a pursuit of ease and indifference.

“I don’t want to be bothered. I don’t want those disturbing pictures. Why do we have to have commercials about feed the children? Can’t we just have commercials about the Oil of Olay or Jingle Bells is bringing you a Lincoln Continental or a Lexus or something else or liquor or anything? Show me commercials on anything, but don’t show me disturbing pictures of starving children.”

You see, then, these three things? They are arrogant. They live in independence of God. They have an abundance of bread and they are indifferent and seeking an idleness.

I. D. They Did Not Help the Poor and Needy.

Can we see all that underscored in the fourth mark of the nature of this particular community called Sodom? They did not help the poor and needy, that fourth quality. They did not help the poor and the needy.

They thought, they believed in the private ownership of property. A lot of people think that is what the Bible teaches. But it doesn’t teach the private ownership of property. It teaches the private stewardship of property and there is a great similarity and a great difference. The similarity is that you, as an individual, should administer the things that you have. You can do better with your money than the government can because as government grows it grows in bloated ways. And the more centralized government control becomes, the more inefficient government becomes and the more waste that is there.

So there is this private control issue. But it is not ownership. It is stewardship. And there is a radical difference. If I think I own something, then I think that what I have got is mine to do with as I see fit. But in the Bible it is never that way. If God has given you something, he has given it to you as a loan, as a stewardship he has entrusted to you and he wants you to use it for his kingdom and, in particular, to extend his kingdom in the lives of people who have great need.

In other words, if you have abundance, you have abundance for a reason and it is to use it to help other people.

And so we see, then, as we look through these four qualities, so far, they are an arrogant people. They have an abundance of material things. They are indifferent and live lives of careless ease. They shut their hearts to the needs of those around them thinking that just because they have been blessed with material things, these things are given to them to titillate their own desires.

I. E. They Were Haughty and Could not Endure Correction.

And this leads them, fifthly, to something else and that is in verse 50, they were haughty. And that kind of haughtiness is a brazen and defiant attitude. It is a haughtiness that is expressed in anger and outrage at those who would ever offer a corrective word.

In other words, this city, this modern American city, if you will, we are so like it in our self-will and selfishness, in our living lives of independence from God. Yet we live with the fruit of the labors of 12 generations of settlers who believed in the future and who sacrificed their own welfare for the welfare of their children, each accumulating and passing on until we came to the greatest generation of selfishness, who gave away the farm in the 1950s.

I have often thought about Tom Brokaw's words, "The Greatest Generation." They were the greatest betrayers of Christian heritage in the history of America. They are the generation that embraced kicking God out of our public life, banishing Jesus, forbidding the posting of the Ten Commandments. It is under that generation and the leaders of that generation, who came to power, that we removed the Bible from the public school system, prayer from public school system. It is the greatest generation of betrayers and all that has come from it has been the fruit of that betrayal.

Arrogance and yet it looks, "America, America, God shed his grace on thee." For we are a nation of incredible material blessing, not unlike the people of Sodom. We have an abundance of bread. And we have leisure time. I remember when I was a boy the work week was much longer. People worked 10 hours a day and half a day on Saturday when I was a boy. And

this sounds like it is some weird story that old grandpas tell. And since I am an old grandpa, I will tell it.

My first job, Chapin's Shell Service Station, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, a block away from the Atlantic Ocean, a block away from the Pavilion where the Dirty Shag was invented, my first job—I worked from six in the morning until six at night with one hour break in the middle of the day, six days a week. That was not uncommon. That was back in 1961, 66 hours a week.

We work far shorter times.

I am not against short workdays. It is not a lot of work or a little work that is the ideal. It is the escape from work that is the myth that is dangled before us, that somehow or other you and I can reenter Eden at some point in our lives. Sadly, Eden, as it was for Adam and Eve, in a fallen world, is always elusive, just beyond our reach. We finally have saved enough money that we can retire and enjoy life and then suddenly, without warning terrible things begin to happen. Our health is broken and children's lives that are now grown need us so desperately and our resources are plundered. Our health is plundered. And why do they call it the golden age except for the amount of gold that we have to spend?

It is always beyond us. There is no place called Eden on earth. There is no place you can get to. There is no place you can work hard enough to get there that you finally arrive and can kick off your shoes and sit back and enjoy life.

You remember, Jesus called a man who thought that way, "A fool." The man had abundance of food. His crops had been so successful and as he sat and he thought about, "What am I going to do with all that I have accumulated? I know what I'll do. I'll tear down my current barns and I will build bigger barns."

And he hears a voice that says, "Thou fool. This very night thy soul will be required of thee" (Luke 12:20).

You see, it is that quest for Eden, that I can live a life of amusement, of indifference, a life without pain, a life without fear, a life without threat, a life where I can simply indulge myself. But, dear ones, it never comes. And

it is, in reality, if we would embrace one basic truth, we are blessed when we work hard even to the day of our death. That doesn't mean I am against retirement or that the Bible is against retirement. Retirement simply affords an opportunity to do volunteer work. But to sit at home in a life of ease and amusement is the quest of a fool.

The most miserable people in the world are people who don't have an alarm clock. It is that drudgery of having to get up and go and do and do for others even when it is voluntary, that is in many ways, in a temporal way, a redemptive thing. It is in the toil and the sweat of our brow, even when we are in our 90s serving others—that brings to us more peace, more satisfaction and more fulfillment than idleness.

But the people of Sodom were arrogant. They had an abundance of material things. They were pursuing pleasure and idleness and a lack of concern for others. They offered no sacrificial help to those around them in great need. They were haughty. And any word of rebuke was for them a most hateful thing.

They were tolerant of everything, but the person who would offer a word of warning. For such a one they have nothing but hate and disdain.

I. F. They Gave Themselves over to Unbridled Sensuality.

Lastly, the sixth thing of Sodom and that for which it is most known, we are told in verse 50 that they “did detestable things before me” (Ezekiel 16:50). Detestable things. The word over in 2 Peter chapter two, which we read a little bit ago in thinking of Lot as a righteous man—and we focus on him more next week. But look at Peter's words as he describes their lifestyle in contrast with Lot. 2 Peter chapter two, verses seven—page 1895. “...And if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men” (2 Peter 2:7). Two words that stand out and need some amplification for us in order to understand them. Unprincipled men, or lawless men...men who have abandoned standards. There is no standard. They are lawless men. They are unprincipled men.

And the word translated filthy is really much better translated as unbridled sensuality, unbridled sensuality. There is sensuality in all of us, isn't there? But there are bridles on it, aren't there?

When you live in a small town there is a bridle on your sensuality. When you live near your extended family there is a bridle on your sensuality. When you are part of a religious community there is a bridle on your sensuality. But when you abandon those natural things you lose the bridle. It is unbridled sensuality. That is the characteristic of Sodom. It was unbridled sensuality.

II. Unbridled Sensuality Progresses Culturally and Individually.

If you want to see it described, turn with me, if you will, to the book of Romans chapter one, starting at verse 18 -- page 1747. Unbridled sensuality. Here it is described. I want you to see it. For there is no chapter in the whole of Scripture that gives us more of a sense of understanding these things than Romans chapter one, beginning at verse 18. Starting at verse 18 -- page 1747 -- please follow along with me.

II. A. Unbridled Sensuality Begins with our Suppressing the Fear of God.

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them [or in them], because God has made it plain to them [or in them]. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Romans 1:18-20).

What are these verses saying? Well, if you read them carefully—and I would urge you to mark them and read them again this afternoon—verses 18 through 20 are telling us that all atheists lie to themselves. There are no atheists in the world. There are no atheists. All men everywhere know that there is a supreme being. They know that from external data. They know that a posteriori. They know that from an observation. They know that from empirical reasoning. They see the order and they understand that such a world didn’t spring from nothing. All men know that.

But this passage is telling us more than that. This passage is telling us there is an inner witness in all human beings. If you are a human being, then you have been created in the image of God. And part of what it is to be created in the image of God is to know the truth at some level. But the trouble is with

man, man suppresses that truth, he represses that truth. He shoves that truth down. He doesn't want to be bothered with it.

II. B. Why Do We Like to Be Amused?

That is why we like to be amused. We don't want to muse on the reality that there is a God. We don't want to muse on the fact that there are moral absolutes, that there are certain things that are sinful and they are sinful regardless of what culture and what time you happen to live in.

And we don't like to muse on the fact that this God is a God of judgment. And that is what is warned about in this very history we are studying this morning. This history stands for us as an example that their whole purpose of their life still serves, millennia later, only to serve as a warning to others that God is not only holy and righteous, but he is a God of judgment. He is to be feared.

Is God a God of love? Of course he is. There is always that gospel invitation. But that God of love is also a God of wrath. If you defy him, he will punish you. If you go against his commandments, you will suffer consequences for it in this life. Read the last verse of Proverbs 11.

II. C. Lot Is in Heaven.

And Lot stands out to us profoundly, this character, in this series of those who didn't make the cut, of a man who will end up in heaven. He was a righteous man. He responded with vexation of heart at what he saw. But he was a man who made foolish choices. He thought of the material welfare of his family. He thought of the social welfare of his family. He thought of material and social advancement for his children and his family.

But in fixing his eyes on these things he ends up losing the very thing that he cherishes the most and he becomes the example of a man who, through foolish choices, experiences God's judgment on his life.

Know because God's grace and God's grace alone saves us, and we receive that grace in Jesus Christ alone and we receive it by faith alone, Lot is in heaven. But make no mistake about it. The fear of God, it seems to have diminished in Lot's life year in and year out. And it was utterly missing from

the people of Sodom, not because they didn't know the truth, but because they suppressed that truth.

II. D. Suppressing the Truth Has Consequences.

And here is what happens when people suppress that truth, verse 21. "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Romans 1:21).

You know, the amazing thing as one whose avocation is the study of history, is that human beings think of themselves as rational creatures. We do. We think that we are capable of objectively analyzing the world around us. What nonsense? I once knew a man who was eaten up with angry emotion, but would swear up and down that he was completely objective. Everyone around him saw through him as a man who was skewed terribly by his emotional bitterness, but he imagined in his own self-assessment that he was a man completely void of emotional influence and that he objectively assessed everything.

I am often "amused" (if you will) when I hear people talk about...they want objective reporting. There is no such thing. Your network lines up with your prejudice. You don't like this network because you are prejudiced one way. You don't like this network because you are prejudiced another way, and so on. Men are incapable of objective analysis of themselves and history.

I will say this for a Postmodern understanding of history: it debunks the myth that history is somehow or another, an objective record of facts. History is written by the winners from a very prejudiced standpoint. It always is.

Where is objective truth to be found? Nowhere, even the truth that God speaks in history. And I want to line up under God's truth, not my truth or your truth.

And so here they are and they are given over to foolishness, verse 22.

"Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles" (Romans 1:22-23).

So here is the result. What happens when a nation says, “We don’t want God”? What happens when a culture says, “We don’t need God”? What happens to a western Europe that once referred to itself as Christendom, the kingdom of Christ, but is no more? It is only a windswept house ready to collapse. That is Europe. And we are not far behind.

Here is what happens when a culture or a civilization, a group of people, turns its back on the truth that it knows but continues to repress. Verse 24, “Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another” (Romans 1:24).

This city that was arrogant and had an abundance of bread and was full of a disdain for the needs of the poor and sought instead a life of luxury and ease, that became increasingly haughty, finally is given over to these detestable things.

Make no mistake about it. These things are detestable. And here it is, verse 25, “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen” (Romans 1:25).

III. The Wholesale Embrace of Unbridled Sensuality Is a Result of The Judgment of God.

“Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts, shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion” (Romans 1:26-27).

III. A. If You Struggle with Sensuality, Here Are Words of Hope.

I want you to reflect with me for a moment on what we just read. Where does this come from? It comes from God giving a people over to life without him. I want you to understand something because there are many people sitting here this morning who struggle with homosexuality and I have a word of encouragement for you. If you look at the person on your right and the person on your left, you understand the person on your right and the person on your left potentially struggles with it as well.

You need to understand something. It isn't this myth that was passed on to the American people in the lies of Kinsey studies that we have 5% or 10% of people who have this predisposition. You need to understand what the Bible teaches. We all have this predisposition. We do. And we are deceiving ourselves if we think we don't. But it is a potential disposition. It isn't actual and realized. But it haunts us at times in our imagination and with wild and random thoughts and in our dreams. But it is there. The potential is there. It is not that you have one group of people that are born with this potentially and another group that are immune to it. If you know anything of what the Scripture teaches, it speaks the ubiquity of this, the universality of this. It is the legacy of our first parents. There is a sensuality within all of us, and when we pull back the restraint, when we take the bridle off, there is no limit to where it will take us.

I want you to understand that. There is no limit to where it will take us. You are potentially a lesbian. You, potentially, are a male homosexual. You are.

Billy Graham is. The pope is. Mother Theresa was. Why? Because when we give free reign to our sensual indulgence, there is no stopping place.

I want you to understand that. And this is actually a word of encouragement. This is a word of hope because Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief. It is a word of hope because God can set you free. You need to understand, then, that the potential for evil is what? When you say to God, "I am going to have it my way. I am going to indulge this." Perhaps it is a heterosexual, premarital relationship. And, by the way, that is the only sexual sin that doesn't bring the death penalty. Did you know that? The only sexual sin that is not viewed by God in his law as the equivalent of first-degree, premeditated murder is simple fornication between an unmarried couple.

What is the penalty of that? Lifelong marriage without ever being able to divorce. That's the penalty.

III. B. Sex Is a Blessing From God, But He Views its Abuse Very Seriously.

All other sexual sin in the Bible, all of it, adultery and everything else, is a capital crime. We read, further. We see here that men were inflamed in verse 27 with lust for one another.

Here is another myth about homosexuality. First myth: certain people are born that way. Biblical fact, all people are born that way in the sense of a potential, a potential, not that you are born and come springing out of your mother's womb in ravenous lust for people of the same sex. That is not what we are saying. But a disposition towards perversion is in you and in me. And that perversion may express itself heterosexually or homosexually or in another way. But it is in us all. And until we come to grips with that, we really are walking in delusion.

A second myth: homosexual people, if they are men, are effeminate, and if they are female, they are masculine. That is a lie. Male homosexuality is masculinity taken off the charts. Female homosexuality is female sexuality taken off the charts.

In other words, male homosexuals are not necessarily effeminate. In a sense, they are men given over without restraint to a masculine sexuality. And female homosexuals are not necessarily manly. They are females given over to a female sexuality without restraint.

What do I mean? Are many homosexuals effeminate in the sense that they emulate the way of a woman? Yes, of course. There are effeminate homosexuals. That doesn't go against what I am telling you. Male homosexuality is characterized by the sinful excesses of males carried to the nth degree. Female homosexuality is characterized by feminine sexuality, in lesbianism, is characterized by that natural drive within women carried to the nth degree.

What is the very essence of male versus female and why is there conflict in every marriage over sex to some degree in a fallen world? Because this is not the world God created. It is the world God created subject to the Fall.

Here it is. Fundamentally, women are looking for relationship. Fundamentally, men are after expression of the sexual act. That is the very essence of the two drives. And it is different in men and women. And you see that in male homosexuality, the most notoriously promiscuous group of people.

The bath houses of San Francisco, the promiscuity of the French Quarter, the promiscuity of Southern Decadence which God stopped with Katrina. It is male sexuality to the nth degree, promiscuous, multiple partners with strangers—not that everyone follows that practice. Whereas, the essence of female homosexuality is a matter of hostility, a pathology against others that pulls two people together in their bitterness. I have never ministered to a lesbian who wasn't bitter, never.

Are male homosexuals always bitter? No. No, not necessarily. I have never ministered to a female homosexual who wasn't bitter, often at her mother, many times at father and other male figures. But it is “you and me against the world” that is the very essence of female homosexuality. It isn't fundamentally sexually driven. It is fundamentally driven by that bitter pathology.

But here it is. And we find the root of it and when we discover the root of it we discover that the potential is in you and me, in all people. It is there. So be careful, dear ones, particularly if you are young people, if you are children, and if you are just going through puberty, and if you are in adolescence, and you begin to make your choices. If you think that you can make choices in defiance to God's commandments and get by with it, beware. Because every time you defy God's commandment you are pulling off that bridle a little bit, that restraint a little bit. And what happens is, as you no longer restrain yourself, there is no stopping point.

I want you to understand something. Please hear it as a pastor, as a student of the Word of God, as a student of history, as a student of an older psychology, as a student of human nature who has wept with hundreds of people who have suffered as they have abandoned God's commandments.

You think at this point that you can do something and it won't affect you. But I want you to read further with me and see what happens. It will affect you. Let's read further, verse 28.

“Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips [what is that doing there?], slanderers, God-haters, insolent,

arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil [that is what the people in Sodom did] ; they disobey their parents [that shouldn't be there, should it?]; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless" (Romans 1:28-31).

Verse 32. "Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things [notice] deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them" (Romans 1:32).

They do them. They approve of those who practice them. But there is, at the same time, an inner knowledge that it is, in reality, in the eyes of God, something that merits death, death, death. And they receive in themselves, the due penalty of their error.

"Degrading their bodies" (Romans 1:24) --

Verse 27, "In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion" (Romans 1:27).

III. C. Sexual Relations Bind Us with Other People: Sex Is More Than a Biological Act.

I want you to understand something about the root of a kind of mental illness that is pandemic in America. When you are promiscuous, when you have sex with multiple partners you always experience a fragmentation of your mind because sex is never simply a biological function.

You see, that is the message that we are given on television and in radio and in magazine and in films and in music: that it is a biological function like going to the bathroom is a biological function.

But in the Bible, sex is more than having a bowel movement. Sex is more than going to the bathroom. It is more than eating or drinking. Sex has a psychic dimension, according to Scripture. We actually become united in our soul, our soul is bound, our soul is intertwined with the soul ever every person with whom we ever have sex. That is why promiscuous sexuality always leads to mental illness. It always leads to a fragmentation of the personality. It always leads to a shattering of the security of self. And there is no healing for it but in Jesus.

You can dope it up with drugs and drown it with liquor and numb it out with the amusement of music, but there is no healing for the fragmentation of promiscuity but in Jesus. You see, that is just one of the consequences of promiscuity.

But I turn, lastly, and read it. This picture that we have in Genesis 19 as Lot is rescued which we will look at, the rescue of Lot, next week. But I just want us to see how incredibly accurate this biblical narrative is of the very nature of a homosexual way of life.

Genesis 19, page 26. You know, the Bible is an unknown book. It really is. And many people are disturbed by a message like this. Let me give you a word I have learned over the years. People who speak against a sermon without biblical warrant are telling you that they have that problem themselves and are not dealing with it.

People who speak against things in sermons and do not have a biblical basis for it are confessing in their own strange way that they have an issue with God in that very area.

So here we have Sodom, an arrogant abundance of material things, a life of ease and idle time an indifference to the needs of the poor, an increasing haughtiness and disdain for any word that would correct them with a moral absolute and being given over to limitless sensuality that has no bottom, that has no limit.

IV. Evil Can Become Ubiquitous in a Civilization.

IV. A. Evil Progresses and Consumes Individuals and Cultures.

Listen to these words. God sends two angels to rescue Lot before he destroys the city as an example, to serve as a warning to others. Lot presses them to come into his house.

Verse four, Genesis 19:4, “Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom...” (Genesis 19:4), not 10%, not 5%, not 3%, 2%, 100%...you see how the potential is in you. The potential is in me. It is in your wife. It is in your husband and it is in your children. And it is in your parents. And there are things that you do not know about other people. And

there are things that are hidden to you about yourself. Here it is. It is ubiquitous. It is universal. It is pervasive and it is all consuming.

Verse four: ‘Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. They called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.” Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, “No, my friends. Don’t do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don’t do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof”’ (Genesis 19:4-8).

The ultimate Middle Eastern standard: “They have come under the protection of my roof” (Genesis 19:8).

Verse nine: “‘Get out of our way,’ they replied. And they said, ‘This fellow came here as an alien, and now he wants to play the judge!’” (Genesis 19:9)

That is that haughty spirit that comes in defiance of it. You want to know haughtiness?

Please understand something, Dear Ones, You need to understand that. You need to understand the issues that face Mainline American denominations today. For we as a nation are embracing this thing. We are in these six stages of the city of Sodom. We are full of pride and self-righteousness. We have incredible material abundance, and we squander it on our own luxurious idleness, and we really are indifferent to sacrificial giving to the poor and needy in the world.

And we respond with a self-righteous venom towards those who say, “But there are moral absolutes.” The only moral absolute is condemnation and intolerance for those who say there are moral absolutes. And here we find it.

“This fellow came here as an alien, and now he wants to play the judge! We’ll treat you worse than them” (Genesis 19:9).

Well, we will find how God rescued Lot next week.

IV. B. We Welcome People with Different Sexual Orientations with the Open Arms of Love, But We Cannot Be Silent Where Scripture Speaks.

But I want to end with this appeal. Some of you here struggle with homosexuality. Some of you struggle with lesbianism. Some of you struggle with the pull to male homosexuality. Far more people here struggle with those things than you would imagine. You are not alone. What I want you to understand is, the potential of that struggle is in every man and woman here and every child here potentially. What I want you to understand is that the Lord Jesus Christ loves you just the way you are. The Lord Jesus Christ invites you to come to him just the way you are. There is nothing that you have ever done that is too bad for Jesus to forgive. There is nothing that has a hold of you that is too powerful for Jesus to break you free from and to set you free. There is nothing that you have done that is so shameful that you can't be received and accepted in God's beloved Son, Jesus.

When the Lord Jesus saves someone, he gives that person a new heart. That doesn't mean that all desire ceases. The same desires that were there before are there afterwards, but you have a new power and a new desire. You want to please God and you have a victory that you find in the power of the Holy Spirit to deal with sin. You may not live that out perfectly in any area of your life for total perfection awaits heaven. But what I want to tell you today is: There is victory in Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ came in the world for you no matter what you struggle with. And I want you to know that this is a church that welcomes people that struggle with homosexuality because we welcome people who struggle with adultery and people who struggle with alcoholism and people who struggle with dishonesty and pride and gluttony and drunkenness and everything else. The church is not for people who finally made it spiritually. It is for people who struggle and want help.

The church is for people who are more sinful than they want to be. So if you are not more sinful than you want to be, go away from here. You don't belong here. If you are okay the way you are and you don't struggle anymore you don't belong in church. Go away and go to hell. Hell is the abode of the people who believe they are good. But heaven is the home of all those who looking at themselves recognize their own moral bankruptcy and cast themselves on God's mercy in Jesus.

I have ministered to many people with sexual sin over the years, literally, hundreds of people. It is far more pervasive than you would ever imagine,

far more pervasive. It is not for me to give a sex lecture. I have never given a sex lecture. But I have preached what the Bible says about sexuality. Never forget those who say those things are telling you and silently confessing without knowing it themselves they have got a sexual problem.

So what am I saying to you? I am saying regardless of your sexual problem, you can come to Jesus today. You can come to Jesus. He will set you free. The blood of Jesus can wash away the worst imaginable thing. And the power of the Holy Spirit is so great that he can give you a new desire, a new heart. And you can look yourself in the mirror and accept yourself just the way you are because God accepts you just the way you are. Will you come to him? Won't you come to him?

Closing Prayer

Let's pray.

Lord, as we look at this group of people, an entire group of cities where very man and woman from young and old gave themselves over to unbridled sensuality and experienced the just penalty in themselves of that unbridled sensuality, Lord, they serve as a warning for us. Would you put the fear of God in all of us, the fear of God? And will you give your goodness to lead us to repentance? For it is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance, that we would repent and come to you.

And, Lord, if we are struggling to know that you welcome strugglers, that it is okay to struggle, that Jesus is the good shepherd who will lift us up and encourage us and help us and that there are other brothers and sisters here who will join in that work of Jesus to comfort and encourage others.

Lord, we pray that you would draw people to yourself today as we look to the year 2008 as a Year of Collapse. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

This was preached on December 30, 2007 and is entitled, "Lot's City: Unbridled Sensuality" (<<http://tinyurl.com/7gq9jwy>>).