

Was Lot Really a Righteous Man?

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The apostle Peter clearly states that Lot was a righteous man.

And if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds) (2 Peter 2:7-8).

Despite Peter's inspired statement, many people have wondered about the actual righteous character of Abraham's nephew, Lot. They wonder: How could a man who lived in Sodom, who offered his own daughters to be raped in order to satisfy a crazed mob and protect his guests, and who impregnated his two daughters, be considered "righteous"?

These are indeed important questions to be answered. In seeking answers, we must also remember, as with any person we read about in Scripture, the Bible is only able to give us brief snapshots of significant events in a person's life. We read of a moment in King David's life when he was an adulterer and murderer (2 Sam. 11-12). Yet, he was still called, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). We read of a time in the life of Saul of Tarsus (who later became the apostle Paul), when he was a violent persecutor of the church (Acts 9:1ff). We read of moments in Peter's life when he was sinking in water for lack of faith (Matt. 14:29-30), telling Jesus He should not die on the cross (Matt. 16:22-23), and denying the Lord three times (Matt. 26:69-75). David, Paul and Peter, despite moments such as these recorded about their lives, were certainly righteous men.

We can think of it in terms of our own life. We all make mistakes. Praise the Lord that we are not judged by a single act of sin, committed in a single moment of time, but rather through a life-long pursuit of trying to walk in the light (1 John 1:7-9). So it is with David, Paul, Peter, and even "righteous" Lot.

Let's consider some of the scenes in his life that have raised serious questions regarding his righteousness. One of the most challenging is when he offered up his daughters to the men of the city to satisfy their wicked desires. The men of the city had surrounded Lot's house and demanded he give them his two house guests, so they could have relations with them (Gen. 19:1-5). Lot was quick to respond to these sinful demands:

But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, and said, "Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly. Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof" (Genesis 19:6-8).

Notice how Lot first encouraged the men not to act so wickedly. This is the action of a righteous man. Still, his offer of his daughters shocks us. The lengths he was willing to go to protect his house guests is something so counter culture to anything we can imagine! Social hospitality at that time required the protection of one's guests. A very similar incident is recorded in the book of Judges (Judges 19:15-25). We must keep in mind, what social custom dictates as being proper, is not always what God has said is proper. In offering up his daughters, Lot was not following any instruction from God. He was only following social custom. Fortunately, for Lot, the angels of God intervened in the situation and struck the men of the city with blindness. Regardless of what

Lot thought was right, the angels (knowing God's will) were not going to let him give up his daughters to the demands of a perverse mob.

What about Lot's daughters becoming pregnant by their father? The inspired text records that they made their father drink wine. Genesis 19:35 says Lot DID NOT KNOW when they laid down or arose. In other words, they got their father so drunk, he did not know what was happening. The actions of his daughters may be a result of the sexual depravity they saw while living in Sodom. I cannot imagine Lot knowingly having relations with his daughters.

Living in Sodom was not a good decision. Yet, even living in that hostile environment, Lot sought to do the right thing. Hence, he showed hospitality to the men (angels) visiting Sodom and encouraged the men of the city not to act so wickedly.

There are valuable lessons to be learned from the events in Lot's life. One lesson specifically cries out to us today. In the text where Peter called Lot a righteous man, we learn a lot (pun intended) about his righteous character. Peter says, as Lot saw the evil conduct of the people of Sodom, it daily tormented his righteous soul. As we look at the sinful conduct of our society, can we say the same?