

May 2006

## A Vexed Soul

*“And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)” 2 Peter 2:7,8*

### Intro:

A tormented soul comes about for the average believer as the result of a breakdown of not having the inner spiritual dynamic, that God has provided for us all, actively operating on the inside in their soul, and from being exposed to a variety of negative external concepts surrounding the believer in the society.

It is the inner spiritual dynamic that protects the soul from the adverse affects of the sinful societies in which we live in the devil's world. If there isn't a strong spiritual life going on inside our souls, then the outward pressures of everyday life will cave in on the soul creating stress in the soul, which leads to the old sin nature control of the soul, then the fragmentation of the soul, and end up in the place that we will be the most miserable of all people on the earth.

Now there is very little, if anything, we can do about the evil of the societies that surround us on the earth, but we can do something about what's taking place inside of us! For believers living in the Church Age we have God's provisions of the filling of the Holy Spirit, the teaching of Bible Doctrine, the new nature, being able to confess our sins to God to recover the filling of the Holy Spirit, claiming the promises of God, living by faith, prayer, etc..

By living within the unique spiritual life that God has given to every believer in Christ he or she will be able to keep the outside pressures of life on the outside, where they belong, and not allow them to translate into stress in the soul. If we fail to do this, then we will end up with a tormented soul as it was with Lot.

As believers in Christ we have to keep our “eyes on the Lord”. How we do that, like Peter walking on the water, is by concentrating on Bible Doctrine each and everyday of our lives. We live our lives in the filling of the Holy Spirit, when we fail and sin we confess that sin to God, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*, 1 John 1:9. We live each day by faith; we claim God's promises by faith; we move forward by faith; we make all our decisions by faith; we live each day with Heaven in view, as did Abraham; we do not allow ourselves to become entangled in the affairs of this life; and we certainly do not allow ourselves to love this world, nor the things of this world.

But the surrounding societies and the culture of the world's people do influence us more than we would like to admit, and they affect our souls more than we realize. Yes it's true that the spiritual life is more than sufficient to offset and keep out of our souls the stress of everyday life, even if the society around us is rife with evil.

But, as so often is the case, we have our eyes set on what's going on around us, and not the things of the Lord, and we end up reacting to it in our souls. When this occurs our souls become overrun by our negative OSN emotional reaction and we become most miserable inside ending up with tormented souls like Lot.

Which brings us around to choices! When Abraham and Lot came into the promised land they both made their choices. Lot chose to live in the fertile valley where life could be good, while Abraham chose to live in the hill country. *“Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.”* **Genesis 13:11-13 Remember, decisions have consequences and sometimes the consequences are not good for us.**

In the economy of those days the accumulation of wealth began with cattle and sheep, then the accumulation of silver, then gold, and finally precious stones and pearls as a luxury wealth item. So it all began with cattle and sheep, but when one had herds and flocks the two most important items would be food and water for your livestock!

The earth produces both the water and the grass of the fields for food, so the next question is, where can one get an abundant supply of both for my animals, in the hill country, where it dries out in the summer heat, or down in the fertile valleys, where the rivers run freely and the grass grows tall?

Lot had the first choice in the matter and he chose to move down into the plain of Jordan, the valley of the Pentapolis where you found the five cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim and Lasha. This is not to say that Abraham would have gone there if Lot had chosen someplace different for the whole land was before them. It's just that Lot chose to move to **that** location, and you notice **that out of all the places he could have lived in the valley he “pitched his tent toward Sodom”**.

This reveals a lot about Lot. There are many dynamics that drive men in the flesh nature; the lust for power, the lust for money, the lust for material possessions, and the lust to be around all the action of the bright lights of the city. There is another drive that people have and that is the need for security, which comes out of the concepts of fear and insecurity and the lack of faith.

By moving to a fertile valley and being near a city Lot would be assured that he would have an abundant supply of food and water for his herds and flocks. This means that the basic needs for himself and his family would be taken care of and that he could have an abundance and end up being prosperous!

But the problem lies in **the consequences of his decision to go for financial security and prosperity**. It meant that he would have to live in an area that would not only have disastrous consequences on his soul and spiritual life, but also on the effect that living in that area would have on his wife and children!

While on the other hand **Abraham had the faith that God would provide for him** and take care of him and all that lived with him regardless of where he lived. Financial security and prosperity was not Abraham's primary concern because he lived by faith. And his primary drive was not for the things that money could buy, but to walk with God!

So when Abraham made his decision the foremost thing in his mind was to live in an area that would be conducive to living the spiritual life of faith before the Lord. Living down in that valley where all that evil nonsense was going on would be an external dynamic that he would have to constantly deal with and would be detrimental to living the kind of life that he wanted to live before the Lord.

Now we know in some cases today the Lord does lead certain individuals to live in or around cities. But the principle is still the same today as then, people usually gravitate toward the cities because of the jobs, opportunities of all sorts, money, housing, security issues, education, political ambitions, etc., because cities are the places that attract money, power, ambition and the opportunity for the gratification of one's lusts.

While the rural areas are still basically the same; jobs are often hard to come by, the wages are lower, educational opportunities are limited, not many places to shop, no malls or discount stores, not much action, not much excitement; in fact, sometimes they can be quite boring for many people. **But what the rural areas do offer** is quality of living, the opportunity to get back to nature, time to spend with friends and family, doing things together that are fun and healthy for all, there is the quietness, being closer to nature, family values are emphasized more, and not near the distractions that can and do get our thinking away from the Word of God.

**What is going on in our souls will motivate us to make certain types of decisions** and in turn **motivate us to certain actions** in our lives. But we must always remember, our decisions have consequences; good decisions, good consequences; bad decisions, bad consequences. It is in the soul where the battle is won or lost.

Now the natural condition of fallen man is one of feeling insecure; he does not feel safe in this world, nor does he feel secure that his various needs will be taken care of. And when you combine lack of faith with that insecurity, then you will always have **fear**. And where fear, not faith, is present then you will have that believer **making decisions** for himself and his family **based upon that fear**. And you will end up having a believer moving to an area, like Lot, that will adversely affect his family and his soul.

And the same thing goes for the lust factor present in our fallen natures. When we operate by our OSN lusts, **then we will make decisions so we can gratify those lusts** and end up, like Lot, living in areas surrounded by the wrong kind of people.

While Abraham not only lived by faith trusting in Yahweh to provide for him, he wanted to have a relationship with the Lord everyday, and he wanted to keep himself and those he cared for away from the negative effects of those kind of people. Remember, they both lived in a major city, Ur of the Chaldees, before they moved down there so **they both knew the hazards of living around godless people.**

Abraham made his decision based upon faith, integrity of the soul, a desire to walk with God in purity and a deep love for his wife. **He wanted to keep himself away from anything that could cause him a problem in his spiritual life!** We did see that Abraham did go down to **Egypt** that time, due to a famine in the land, but that move **did not precede out of faith!** It caused him a problem, but God took over and caused it to work out for his good.

The fact that money and power was the motivation for Lot moving into the valley of the five cities, and most specifically Sodom the chief city of the five is brought out in the passages of Genesis. In the chapter thirteen passage we have, *“Then Lot **chose** him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and **pitched his tent toward Sodom.** But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.”* Genesis 13:11-13

This passage brings out very clearly that Lot chose to move into the area of the five cities of the Pentapolis, that he chose to pitch his tent **as close to Sodom as he could get** and still remain with his herds and flocks, and we notice that he had moved into the area with only his tent. **His dwelling at this time was only a tent!**

As time goes by the narrative brings us around to the two angels that the Lord had sent to warn Lot about the impending judgment of God on the cities in the plain. They didn't warn Abraham because he was out of the danger zone. *“And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;”* Genesis 19:1

But where did the angels find Lot? He wasn't out in the fields with his flocks and cattle; **he now was sitting at the gate of the city!** The gate of the city was where the men with distinction, power and rule gathered each day to govern the affairs of the town or city they lived in. It was a place of honor, position and distinction. And we also notice that he no longer is living in a tent. He now has his **own house!** *“And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your **servant's house,** and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.”* Genesis 19:2

Lot had worked all those years toward a goal, which is the reason why he wanted to settle down in that area, he wanted to acquire for himself money, financial security, power, position, acceptability and political influence and he finally did . **Can we not see how he had gone after the things of the world, settled down in the community and became conformed to the community in which he lived! Are we?**

But where was the doctrinal man Abraham all those years? He was still living out in the hill country tending his flocks and herds, walking with God each day of his life, **and still living in a tent!** Both Abraham and Lot were righteous in the eyes of God, but each had their eyes on different things. **Abraham** had his eyes on eternity and the New Jerusalem that God had prepared for both of them to live in. While **Lot** had his eyes on temporal wealth, a temporal home, money and integration into the local community.

Abraham was wealthy for God had given him much wealth. He could have built a home for himself, as did Lot; he could have built an entire subdivision of homes; he could have built a city! But **he was content to live in a tent**, which would be analogous to renting today, or living in a trailer. Remember the idea that separates a tent from a house is that one is temporary and the other is permanent. I don't know if Sarai was content living in a tent all those years; after all her name did mean "Nagger", but Abraham was.

There are two types of believers brought out in the lives of Abraham and Lot. **Abraham represents those believers who live by faith** depending on the grace of God for their lives. While **Lot represents the works oriented believer**; the majority of believers living today. The works oriented believers have their own ideas, they follow their own plans for their lives and they work hard to get what they want out of life. While the faith believer lives by faith trusting in the Lord that he will provide for them what he wants to give them. The works oriented believer is occupied with the things of the World and the flesh, while the grace oriented believer is occupied with Christ through Bible Doctrine.

Abraham got what wanted he wanted out of life because he was content to live by faith and wait for God to give it to him. In the meantime he occupied himself with the Word of God and the promises that God made to him. Lot got out of life what he wanted; he did it through his own works, but at a terrible cost to him!

**Abraham** became wealthy because God in his grace made him wealthy. Abraham became the father of all who believe on Christ, the Messiah came through his line, after Sarah passed away he remarried and had several children by Keturah, he lived a life of integrity, he was well respected by all and so many other wonderful things. Not to mention the fact that Abraham, due to his occupation with Jesus Christ, had a peaceful soul and inner mental stability all his life!

But this was not the case with **Lot**. His soul was tormented; it was tormented each day by the things that he saw and heard. And it was all because of the bad decisions that he had made to go for temporal wealth, to own his own house, position and power in the community and not to walk with God.

And, after working for all those years to build his life in his own works without any regard as to how it would impact him and his family, **at the end of it all it all went up in smoke!** His daughters demonstrated total lack of integrity because they were engaged to be married to a couple of Sodomites. His wife ended up dead. And then, after it was all over, they got him drunk on two separate occasions and had sex with him!

## A. Lot's Tormented Soul

“*And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:” 2 Peter 2:7 - και δικαιον λωτ καταπονουμενον υπο της των αθεσμων εν ασελγεια αναστροφης ερρυσατο - ερρυσατο – aorist middle indicative of *rhuo*, to rescue, καταπονουμενον – present passive participle of *kataponeo*, to vex or torment.*

The grammar of the present participle shows that this had become an ongoing condition for Lot. And the passive voice shows that this action occurred because of the outside influence of the evil going on around him in the world system coupled with the failure to apply the doctrinal problem solving devices of living one's life in the spiritual dynamic that comes through occupation with Christ through his Word.

Abraham lived his life in the spiritual dynamic, Lot didn't. And it didn't help Lot in his spiritual life by living in such an area. **If he had moved out into the country, thereby removing the source of irritation, and had occupied himself with God's Word, all this could have been avoided!**

Sometimes as believers we need to take stock of our lives and evaluate our decisions concerning our jobs, where we are living, who we associate with and the type of people we have to live around, as to how they have impacted us, our wives and our children. Is the money, the school, the home and having shopping malls nearby worth it all?

The fact that Lot's soul was tormented was a daily fact of life for him. Now it didn't have to be, but it was due to his desires and bad decisions. It's bad enough that believers live in stressful situations, as most in America today are all too familiar with, but to live in a community where wickedness, including homosexual rape, was a standard practice by the people was more than his righteous soul could take.

*Kataponeo* used in a physical sense meant to be worn out with exhausting labor. It was used of a poor slave whose master worked him so hard that by the end of the day he was completely worn out. Or of the Egyptian taskmaster who beat an already exhausted slave to get him to work harder. So it brings in the ideas of weariness and exhaustion of the body as well as blows to the body causing pain.

Figuratively *kataponeo* looks at what is happening to the soul. The soul is being worn down, it's being beat up, as we would say, each day of Lot's life, and it's causing Lot pain and distress in his soul. Lot was totally stressed out and worn out in his soul. The outward pressure of life had entered into his soul and became stress in the soul. Remember pressure is **inevitable**, stress is **optional**.

In our society there are lots of stressors: trying to make a living, the high cost of housing, gasoline, cars, food, clothing, low paying jobs, jobs being outsourced to other nations, repressive laws, insane governmental regulations, inmates running the asylum, unbearable traffic, rude people, etc., etc.. Today one has to be focused 100% on Bible Doctrine and the true filling of the Holy Spirit to maintain their spiritual life and sanity.

But in Lot's situation we have something added and that was the gross immorality of the people living around him. Their lifestyles violated his norms and standards and his conscience and as the result it tormented him on the inside. Now he could have moved away, but his desire for financial security and success was so strong that he stayed with the result that he did harm to his soul and the souls of those God entrusted to him.

Lot's tormented soul was due to Lot's decisions and it was totally Lot's fault that his soul was tormented! **Decisions to gratify any of our lust patterns will always come back to bite us in the rear!** Our decisions must always be based upon walking with God, serving the Lord, doing the Lord's will, taking in Bible Doctrine, fellowshiping with God each day and creating or living in an environment conducive to all that, not one that is distracting or destructive to those ends!

If one is living in an area that is a party town, Reno, Vegas, etc., and you're caught up in the **party** crowd, then you need to really pray as to the Lord's will about moving to another area. If you can't or won't handle it sometimes a move is the best thing. If you're living in an area where violence and intimidation is a part of daily life, and if you can't or won't handle it with the spiritual life dynamics, and it may not be God's will for you to live there, instead of living in **fear** each day, you might want to pray about moving to another community. If you live in an area, or are around situations and people where you're reacting with **anger** all the time, you might want to pray about moving to a quieter, less hectic place. And if you live in an area where the people have no norms and standards to speak of, and your **conscience** always bothers you, then you too might want to pray about moving to an area where the people are more decent, or at least minimize your contact with all that.

Bible Doctrine is always the solution, but doctrine also teaches us that by removing ourselves from a situation or environment harmful to our souls we can spare ourselves a lot of misery. In other words, why subject ourselves to things day after day that always end up with us getting into one of the many emotional reactor factors? Why live in **fear**? Why be **angry** all the time? Why have your **conscience** offended daily? If you can't adjust, if you're not handling it with doctrine, then put it before the Lord as to a move!

The passage says that Lot was *vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked*, or vexed by the filthy lives of lawless men - καταπονουμενον υπο της των αθεσμων εν ασελγεια αναστροφης. *Hupo* denotes the agent or the cause for something. Lot's soul was tormented **by** the immorality that went on around him.

We have three words to consider in this passage *athesmon*, *aselgeia* and *anastrophes*. The word conversation, *anastrophes*, refers to the manner of one's living, his conduct, his behavior, how he lives his life, or as we would say today, his lifestyle. Everybody has a lifestyle; it's simply how he or she live their lives.

The word for filthy is *aselgeia* which brings out the ideas of the absence of restraint, excess, indecency, lasciviousness and all the other terms for shameful conduct, but more than that it also has the idea of an **insolent disregard for common decency**.

It tells us that the individual is not only involved in the grossest kind of immorality, such as homosexuality in this passage, which is a perversion of the natural order, but does so **arrogantly flaunting it in direct antagonism to common decency.**

The word for lawless men is *asthesmon*, τῶν ἀθεσμων, from *a* – negative and *thesmos* – law. Normally the word for law in the NT is *nomos*, lawless would be *anomos*, But *asthesmos* is used only here and in 2 Peter 3:17, “*Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.*”

*Athesmos* was a much stronger word, from the idea of what was laid down, and was used of a divine ordinance, a fundamental law that had been established from the beginning. It has the idea of a law that never had to be written down by man or God. Such as, ice is cold, the sun is hot, the laws of physics, if you stay out in the hot sun too long you'll get a sunburn, if you overeat you'll put on weight, you have to work if you want to eat, short hair for a man, long hair for a woman, if you bang your head against a wall it will hurt; geese mate and travel with geese, ducks with ducks, elephants with elephants.

These are the fundamental laws of nature established and ordained by God in the beginning. They do not have to be written down, although God did under the Old Covenant, they're there and anyone can recognize them. And for man God established and ordained in the beginning that he is to marry and have sex only with a woman and not a man, and woman with man not woman. “*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*” Genesis 2:24

So what these people were doing was not only wrong and unlawful, but that they were **going against the natural order of things that God established in the beginning with the human race**, and had got to the place that they were arrogant and insolent about it in a public manner, even to the place of practicing homosexual rape. As Paul wrote in Romans 1:26, “*For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.*”

Lot was tormented by the immorality of the people of Sodom and the area, **but he was the one who moved there!** If he didn't like it, then he shouldn't have moved into the area. And if he found out afterward, **then he should have moved out!** The issue before him was not to judge the people, (that was God's job), but to ascertain as to whether an area one is moving into is conducive to living a healthy spiritual life for him and his family.

Even the Sodomites understood the matter of judgment. “*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! We'll treat you worse than them.'* They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door.” Genesis 19:9 If you don't like the way people are in a community, and it's irritating to you, it's not your position to judge, criticize, or try to change them, but to move on to a better area.



## B. Surrounded By Evil.

“(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, **vexed** his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)” 2 Peter 2:8 - βλεμματι γαρ και ακοη ο δικαιος εγκατοικων εν αυτοις ημεραν εξ ημερας ψυχην δικαιαν ανομοις εργοις **εβασανιζεν** – present active participle – *enkatoikeo*, imperfect active indicative – *basanizo*.

The word dwelling is *enkatoikeo* a compound of three words. *Oikeo* meant to dwell in a house, *katoicheo* meant to settle down and dwell fixedly in one place, *kataschenoo* meant to dwell in a tent, a temporary situation as with Abraham and *enkatoicheo* meant to settle down permanently in one place making it you home, but to do it among other people. To settle down permanently and make yourself one of the people in the area you moved to.

We notice that Lot was righteous. He may not have lived righteously; he may not have made decisions based upon his righteousness; he may have lived his life based upon lust gratification and political aspirations, but he was righteous in the eyes of God. Once an individual believes in Christ as their Savior, as both Abraham and Lot did, then they are righteous in the eyes of God forever.

The word for *vex* here is *basanizo* a word change from the preceding verse. In it we had the word *kataponeo* which brought out the idea of being worn out. The word *basanizo* goes back originally to something called a touchstone. It was a stone that they would rub gold on to tell if it was really gold by the color left on the touchstone. So the act of rubbing on something brought out the truth about the gold.

From there it came to be used for the concept of torturing a poor individual to determine the truth. Torture is an evil practice America left behind in the old world when we formed this great country, but has been adopted once again, a practice used by evil despots and one that God will not honor. And from the idea of torturing an individual by the use of various things *basanizo* came simply to mean torture or torment. To cause extreme pain of the body or the soul.

Lot was in great torment; the torment was in his soul, and it was caused by the things going on around him each day by the people that he had settled down and lived among. And it was not just one thing, but **many** things, ανομοις εργοις , unrighteous activities. This torment of soul actually refers to the believer getting to the place of mental illness. **Which leads us to the question, are our political aspirations, our financial insecurity and our desire to have money and things worth losing our minds?**

We see that it was caused by seeing and hearing the things that went on in the lifestyles of these people. Now they were also going on at the same time of Abraham's existence, but they didn't bother him! Why? Because **Abraham didn't see or hear them!** People say you can't run away from your problems. But in some cases you can! By moving away you are correcting the thing that is causing your problem!

The word *basanizo* is in the present participle which shows that it was a way of life for him. How tragic it is that we bring self induced misery into our own lives because of our own bad decisions! Abraham made his decisions so that he could have a life of peace and quiet as he walked with God. But Lot made his decision based upon financial security and political aspirations and suffered greatly. **Is it worth it??**

*Dwelling among them, enkatoikeo*, is in the imperfect active indicative which looks at a continuous action that took place in the past that came to an end. The dynamic of being **vexed** in his soul took place at the same time of the action of **dwelling** among them. That is, **as long as he was living among them, his soul was being tormented** because he was subjecting his righteous soul to abuse. But by moving away one is removing the source of the abuse thereby removing the effect of the abuse on the soul.

By moving away from towns, cities, or communities that have certain things going on in them that are not spiritually healthy for you and your family is not running away from the problem. Just the opposite; it's solving a problem! Running away is a fear based concept, while what we're talking about is making decisions based upon doctrinal principles connected to living a spiritually and physically healthy life.

*Unlawful deeds, δικαιοσυνων ανομοιωσιν*, is in the plural which tells us the problem was not just immorality of lifestyle, but other things as well, and you can be sure criminality was a part of it. High crime areas, poverty, gangs, violence, the threat of violence, noise pollution, air and water pollution, traffic, unfriendly and hateful people, etc., create an unhealthy atmosphere of fear and other emotions to live life and raise one's family in.

These areas become breeding grounds for all types of negative behavior in the people that live in them that go to creating a difficult negative atmosphere to live in. The end result will be a tormented soul. What can one do? You can't change the people. So you are left with can I continue living in this, or is a move to a better area in the air? If you are not handling it spiritually, and if it's having a negative effect on the souls and lifestyles of you and your family, then one might want to pray to the Lord about a move to a place where you can walk with the Lord and enjoy a little peace and quiet.

The important thing to remember is that **our soul life is the most important thing!** And that means we need to maintain the inner spiritual dynamic for its well being, but that we also need to effect a tranquil external environment as much as we can. Paul wrote the Church that we are to pray that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life, *“For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”* 1 Timothy 2:2

This entails the idea of external tranquility in our environment as well as inner tranquility of soul. Which means that our homes are to be havens of peace, and as much as possible, our surrounding communities in which we live. And if we live in a cesspool of fear and filth we might want to think about moving to a more peaceful area in which to live our lives and raise our families, even if it means a cut in pay!

Pastor Mike

