

✠ *In the Name of Jesus* ✠

“Make like a lot and leave.” Doesn’t that sound like the advice a greedy friend would give us these days about taking a dirty job that pays well for just a little while? “Make like a lot and leave.”

How ironic! Greed is one of the things tearing away at the fabric of the church on earth. I wonder how many Christians read their lottery tickets sometime during 2018 to see if they won, but did not read their Bible in 2018 to see that in Christ our Savior we win God’s favor for free, a place of rest in God’s home that no amount of earthly wealth can buy.

Let’s tighten the noose. I wonder how many Christians read their Bible AND played the lottery in 2018. “Is that okay?” It depends. Does your attitude come close to: “Play the lottery. You could make like a lot and leave work, or leave on vacation.” Still sounds greedy when we put it that way.

Let’s tighten the noose. I wonder how many Christians read their Bible in 2018 and did not play the lottery all year. “Is that okay?” It depends. Do you still want to get rich? I don’t mean filthy rich, but close enough that you’ll never have to worry? Still sounds greedy, or like a lack of trust in God.

Why do we want to be rich? Don’t we realize what a great burden wealth is? Wealthy people still worry. They pay a lot for security so they can hang on to what they’ve got. They worry about scams and who is really their friend. They worry about loved ones being kidnapped and held for ransom. They worry about their loved ones pushing them into a nursing home and taking control of the estate before it’s time.

I’m going on and on about greed because it has an effect on believers, today and in Bible times. There was the nephew of the patriarch Abraham. The nephew’s name was Lot. Lot’s greed got him in trouble. | Friends, we’re celebrating the first Sunday in Advent, a Sunday when we think about Jesus’ second advent. Jesus will come back again, not to save all people but to judge us all. Let’s learn a lesson from Genesis 19 about setting our hearts on things that can lead us away from Jesus. **LET’S MAKE LIKE A LOT AND LEAVE.**

But maybe you’ve never heard of Lot before. Well, as Abraham’s nephew, Lot left the family homestead with Abraham and headed for what today we call the Holy Land. Except that it wasn’t very holy back then. The Canaanites lived there. Their ideas ran counter to God’s will in every imaginable way. Then Abraham and Lot moved in. But soon the two of

them had so much livestock that they had to live apart in order for their animals to find enough grass to eat. Lot chose to live near in Sodom. The pastures were greener there, and he was a little greedy.

Lot's choice brought him trouble because soon he moved into town. The king of Sodom got into a spat with a more powerful enemy. The enemy captured Sodom and carried off everyone, including Lot. Abraham found out and mounted a counterattack to rescue Lot. He succeeded.

Lot should have left Sodom at that time. But he chose to stay where regard for 'right and wrong in God's sight' was not held in high honor. Lot's choice brought him more trouble. You see, the Lord had had it up to here with the Sodomites and all their wickedness. He was planning to give them what they deserved. | Doesn't that remind you of how the Lord is planning to give unbelievers what they deserve at Jesus' second advent on the Last Day?

One day while he was visiting Abraham, the Lord shared what he was planning for Sodom (Genesis 18). Abraham was concerned about his nephew Lot. He asked the Lord to spare Sodom if just ten righteous people could be found in the city. | Do we pray for our relatives and friends? They (and we) live in a world that rivals

Sodom for the ways it shows it's lack of faith in Jesus as the Savior?

The Lord agreed to Abraham's request and sent two angels into Sodom. 'How the inhabitants treated the angels' would prove whether they were as wicked as their reputation. They were. Shortly after Lot took the angels into his home for a night's lodging, the men of Sodom gathered around Lot's home like a mob. They demanded Lot turn over his two guests so they could violate them. Lot tried to reason with them. He suggested they abuse his two daughters instead. | This shows how far down God's people can slip when they surround themselves with people who love God little. Reminds me of 1 Corinthians 15:33. "*Do not be deceived. Bad company corrupts good character.*"

By the time the angels came to rescue Lot, he didn't have much good character anymore. It's like Lot had forgotten where our sex appetite comes from. But we know. Our Creator planted the sex appetite in us. He actually wants us to enjoy sex within the safety of marriage between a man and a woman. But after the fall into sin, God put limits on the use of this gift so we wouldn't bring harm to our souls by what we do with our bodies. That's why he gave us the Sixth Commandment: "*You shall not commit adultery.*" He loves us. In the Bible God promises to bless this gift when

used as directed (Psalm 128, Proverbs 5). He also promises consequences when people wipe their feet on the Sixth Commandment (Hebrews 13:4). How many different kinds of STDs (or STIs) are there? How many kinds of unhappiness have you seen in the lives of people who don't care how God defines right and wrong? Are we, like Lot, becoming spiritually desensitized to abuses against the purity and decency God wants in all people? Do we ever appear to approve behavior that God has declared wrong? LET'S MAKE LIKE A LOT AND LEAVE.

Except we haven't gotten to that part of the story yet. When the men of the city tried to harm Lot, the two angels pulled Lot back inside his home and struck the men outside with blindness so they couldn't find the door to Lot's home. They told Lot to go warn his relatives about the judgment that would soon befall the city. But Lot's sons-in-law thought he was joking.

Here's where our text begins. 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."* Would you have left quickly? Lot didn't. The angels actually had to force rescue onto Lot. 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. | Let's not be like Lot in his hesitation to leave behind whatever is harming us spiritually. Let's not let our hearts become so closely entwined with the things of this world, so attached to what this life has to offer that we are reluctant to make a clean break. I'm talking about times when we don't want to turn off our music or video game or phone or entertainment program so we can give our full attention to God's Word for a while, or to prayer. Are there friends you ought to stop being friends with because of their bad influence on you? Is there a food or a drink or an activity that you ought to make a clean break with because moderation is no longer likely? Has living in our wicked city warped our sense of right and wrong, crippling our capacity to make sound decisions and take quick action?

We can't physically leave like Lot. Where could we move to? As long as we must live here on earth, we're going to be like Peter describes Lot, ^{7a}*righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men* ⁸*(for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)* (2 Peter 2:7-8). Perhaps part of Lot's torment was leaving behind the two young men who were engaged to his daughters. But at some point we must choose between

‘the Lord’ and ‘people who don’t trust in the Lord.’ LET’S MAKE LIKE A LOT AND LEAVE.

17As soon as [the angels] had brought them out [of Sodom], 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!” Now why would the angel have to tell Lot and his family not to look back? Because they were to make a complete break and put the Lord first in their lives again. The Lord wanted to spare them from the judgment he rained down on Sodom. | The Lord wants to spare us from the judgment he will rain down on the Last Day.

26But Lot’s wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. When she disobeyed the angel’s command (which was really the Lord’s command), she showed that she left her heart in Sodom. She hadn’t really wanted to be rescued by God. | Most of us have been there too, trapped in a sin, not wanting to leave it behind, not wanting to be rescued by the Lord. But he rescued us anyway. That’s grace! What a warning not to look back! Jesus taught, *Remember Lot’s wife! Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it* (Luke 17:30-33). In other words, even if you are faced with the choice of ‘death for obeying Jesus’ or ‘life for disobeying

him,’ remember: if you lose your life for Jesus, he has already given you eternal life. LET’S MAKE LIKE A LOT AND LEAVE. It’s better than being turned into a salt lick for the deer.

27Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the LORD. 28He 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. 29So 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. In other words, Abraham received what he asked for in prayer. So Abraham rescued Lot a second time. | Let’s be like our father Abraham and pray for those who need to be rescued from an infectious sin or from unbelief.

Lot left Sodom before God destroyed it. We can’t leave this world physically, but we can repent of all that we have done wrong. Lot left Sodom by taking his heart out of Sodom before it was too late. Let’s take our hearts out of the world and put them into God’s Word. Lot tried to take his relatives with him. Let’s try to take our relatives with us by sharing God’s Word with them. LET’S MAKE LIKE A LOT AND LEAVE.