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A LOT IN SODOM
By Forman Lincicome

Author of
"Behold the Man," etc.

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TO MY WIFE

To whose cheerful self-denial and devotion to my work; to whose rigid economy in administering domestic expenditures; to whose ready adjustment of her wants to the exigencies of a meager support, in our earlier life; to whose careful and godly training of our children, in my protracted absences from home; and to whose example of faith and purity of heart I am more deeply indebted, as a minister of the gospel, than to any one except our Maker,

This booklet is affectionately inscribed

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PREFACE

For many years Reverend Lincicome has preached a vigorous, unbiased, impelling Gospel and the Lord has wonderfully blessed his evangelism.

Out of the "Treasury" he has brought something new, fresh and sparkling. If you have heard him preach it, I am certain you will enjoy reading it the more; if you are reading it first, you will have a yearning to hear it, and you will have missed something worth while if you do not hear it preached in the author's inimitable style.

This sermon has stood the test. It has been productive of much good and I expect it, in this form, to lead many to make the right choice. I heartily commend it to young and old, ministry and laity.

Reverend Lincicome has a large circle of friends who will welcome the appearance of this booklet.

Newton W. Fink

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A LOT IN SODOM

Text: Gen. 13:11

"Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan."

There are three big factors in the making of a man, namely: heredity, environment, and choice. Heredity and environment are mighty, fashioning, fixing forces that meet every one of us at the very threshold of life. But the choice of which my text speaks is by far the greatest in the making or unmaking of a man.

The law of choice is inexorable. You can no more change it than you can change the sun in its course. There are some things we can evade, some things we can treat with indifference, but when it comes to the choosing of a master there is no middle ground. Christianity presents us with a choice -- with a choice of one of two lives; one of two deaths; one of two resurrections; one of two destinies; one of two masters, and choose one or the other we must.

A choice is a momentous thing, for a choice results in an action, and an action results in a habit; a habit results in a character, and a character results in a destiny.

It is our choices rather than our environment that form our character and that settle our destiny.

We sink or soar according to the choices we make. I disagree with modern psychology when it says we are creatures of environment. The facts are every man lives from the heart out. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he."

We reach out into our environment and by the quality of our souls pull to ourselves conditions most like unto ourselves.

The best way and the most inexpensive way to change a man's environment is to change the man. What is that story about putting a pig in the parlor and waiting for it to change? Well, something will change; but it won't be the pig.

You will remember the circumstance that surrounds the text. Abraham had gone to Canaan and it is said, "Lot went with him." There are many people like Lot who are going with somebody else whether they are going right or wrong.

You could put Lot's character into five words, "And Lot went with them." Lot was a man without convictions. Note, I did not say without a belief. A belief is one thing and a conviction is another thing. A belief is what a man holds while a conviction is what holds the man.

The bulk of humanity is doing the thing because some one else is doing it. One man takes God's name in vain because other men do it. One man drinks because other men drink. One man smokes and chews because other men smoke and chew.

It is easy to go with the crowd; you need not have any mind, nor purpose, nor will, nor culture. It doesn't require any originality to lose your soul. You don't need any creative genius to find your way to hell -- just follow the crowd and you will land there.

Oh, for the sturdiness of a true independence! It is glorious to see a Martin Luther standing all by himself starting a new fashion of freedom. It is wonderful to see a Caleb withstanding the clamor of the other spies, and following the Lord only. It is great to see the Hebrew boys standing upright, while the masses all about them have prostrated themselves before the golden image. It is magnificent to see a Daniel refusing to defile himself with the king's meat.

Everybody recognizes the difference between a man who has convictions of his own and one who is governed by the opinions of the crowd. The one possesses character majestically strong and royal. The other is superficial and muddy in character. The fellow who has no convictions of his own follows the trend of the mob. What the mob thinks he thinks; what the mob does he does; where the mob goes he goes.

Lot went with Abraham to Canaan and a famine arose, and they took a bee-line for Egypt; and on their way back from Egypt their herdsmen got into a quarrel over the pasture land, and Abraham said, "Lot, we be brethren. There is plenty of land for both of us. So I am going to give

you your choice. There is the hill-top country, also the well-watered plain of Jordan." My text says, "Lot chose all the plain of Jordan."

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In this sermon I am going to call your attention to three things regarding Lot's choice:

1

I WOULD HAVE YOU NOTE IT WAS A VOLUNTARY CHOICE.

2

YOU WILL SEE IT WAS AN EXPENSIVE Choice.

3

IT WAS A SELFISH CHOICE.

* * * * *

1

IT WAS A VOLUNTARY CHOICE

Two parts of the country were put before him; he was asked to take his choice and he voluntarily chose the plain of Jordan. There are just two ways set before us all -- the broad way and the narrow way. We have all voluntarily taken the way we are going. If you are on your way to heaven, no one has made you go that way. If you are on your way to perdition, no one is making you go that way.

When a young man sixteen years of age I was made to feel my need of the Savior and in less than two weeks from that time I found my way to a mourner's bench and surrendered all to Christ. Nobody made me do it. I, of my own free choice, did it.

There is nothing arbitrary about God's dealings with us. He sets before us the plan of redemption. He describes the blessedness of heaven and depicts the horrors of hell, but He does not choose for us nor force us to choose.

Some would tell us that they are creatures of environment and that they do what they do because they can't help doing it. I do not believe that. I will admit that environment is a great and mighty force, but it of itself has never yet saved a single person. Environment did not save Adam and Eve. They had a better environment than you will ever have -- yet they fell from that beautiful and wholesome place. Nor did environment, on the other hand, debase Joseph. He was sold into that idolatrous country, lied on by an unprincipled woman, put in prison for years, and yet we see him rising superior to his environment. God made Joseph bigger than his circumstances and what He did for Joseph He can do for you and for me.

Heredity, in my opinion, is a greater force than environment; but we will say that both heredity and environment, as powerful as they may be, can not debase a man without that man's own consent.

You are not a creature of environment. You are a creature of your own will. You are what you are because you will to be. Your will is the base line of your character. Your character is pivoted on your will, your salvation is pivoted on your will, and your destiny is pivoted on your will. If at last you make your bed in perdition you will not get rid of the fact that the gulf that separates you from love, life and heaven was fixed by your own self-will. For everybody that goes to hell goes on his own feet, in his own shoes, by his own free choice against the will of a brokenhearted God.

There are two victorious elements in the life of every person, namely: the power of God and the will of man. Next to the omnipotence of God is the will of man. Your will may be rather weak but your will, hooked on to the power of God, will pull you through any sort of environment.

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2

LOT'S CHOICE WAS AN EXPENSIVE CHOICE

Lot would never have made the choice had he counted the cost; the same is true of some of you. There are hot, scalding tears running down over the cheeks of multitudes because of this very thing -- a failure to sit down and count the cost.

There is on record many a dishonest transaction, defeated candidate, horrible suicide, dishonorable divorce, financial failure and untimely death that never would have soiled the pages of human history had the persons first sat down and counted the cost.

There are people now in every one of the fifty-two penitentiaries of the United States from the senate, from the judicial bench, from the city council, from the counting-house, from the pulpit and from the bar, because they failed to do what Jesus said, "Sit down and count the cost."

I am calling your attention to three things it cost Lot to make this choice, which will let us see his choice was an expensive choice.

First, it cost Lot the price of true success.

His many friends doubtless said to him that he ought to leave the farm; that a man with his ability and magnetic personality could have most any position in the city of Sodom. They no doubt told him that if he stayed on the farm his girls would all grow up to be old maids and that he owed it to them to get them into society and into the city where they would have a chance to succeed. This seems to be the world's idea of success. But the world has a wrong idea of success. The world's idea of success is to have the highest rating in Bradstreet, to have the largest tax roll, to have a seat in congress, or to be a president of a university, or to marry the children into families of wealth -- but not so.

True success does not consist in what we have but rather in what we are. It must be viewed in the light of another world. If this life were all, if the grave put an end to our existence, then it might be that by gaining the world's honors, wealth and pleasures, one could be considered a success.

Since death is not an ending, and only a beginning, then to have lived without Christ and to have died without Christ and to stand at the judgment without Christ mean that you have lived and died a failure, for man is a success only as he accomplishes the purpose for which he was created.

Every man is made for two worlds, and only as he lives with the background of another world in his thought can he fulfill God's purpose in his living for this world.

The man who lives for only one world at a time has dissipated one half of his heritage. A one-world man is an inevitable failure, yet the world is full of people who have no thought but for the present. People are living, for the most part, just as if they would live forever. They do not say there is no God, but they act and live as if there were no God. They are not infidels in theory, but infidels in practice.

Open almost any magazine and you can read in big letters, "Be a success," and right under it you will see a man seated in a Packard with these words, "He gets \$10,000 a year." He is supposed to be a success because he rides in a fine car and gets a big salary, while the man who works in the office as a bookkeeper for \$150 a month is supposed to be a failure.

Society is shot through and through with this material miasma. Ancient Israel had nothing on modern America in bowing down to the golden calf of material success. With many people who live today, ideals are nothing, while deals seem to be everything. Keen minds are lauded while noble souls are ignored. Yet what is more tragic than an individual with a 10 by 12 mind and a 2 by 4 soul, or a man who is well upholstered without but has log cabin furnishings within.

Second, it cost Lot the loss of the companionship of pure people to make such a choice.

Lot is no longer with godly Abraham. The choice he made took him away. A man is making a foolish choice when he makes a decision that takes him away from the companionship and fellowship of God's people. A godly companion is a tonic to a spiritual life; a godly companion is worth more than treasures -- at least Moses considered it so. "By faith Moses, when he came to years, chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God."

Moses, in making his choice, did what every other person ought to do -- he weighed the present with the eternal. He weighed the present honors, riches and pleasures of Egypt which could be only for a brief season, with the eternal honors, riches and pleasures at God's right hand forevermore.

Note, by faith he made this choice.

There is a tendency in the human mind to live by sense rather than by faith. Sense always prefers the present to the future. It is always tragic to me to hear of a man's discounting a note in a bad transaction. By so doing he says, "I want money now." The note calls for one thousand dollars and is good if he will wait, but he would rather have eight hundred dollars now than to have a thousand later on, and so it is with the bulk of the people.

This is why the multitudes would rather have a saxophone now, bought on the installment plan, than a golden harp by and by.

Every person is made in some measure by the things outside of himself. There are three things outside of a man that help to make or unmake him: The pictures he sees, the company he keeps, and the books he reads. Books come next to human beings in molding character, for they are in a very real sense the impersonation of their authors. Books are living things; they have heads and hearts and arteries through which courses moral and intellectual blood.

It is difficult to tell at the present time which is disseminating the most filth, the movie or the fiction press. The mental filth that is being sold at many of the book-stands in our cities is nothing short of demoralizing, to say the least.

Sinclair Lewis has just said that American literature has ripened. It seems to me that much of it has reached a stage beyond ripening. If you, young people, would be more careful about the company you keep, the books you read and the pictures you see, you would not have such a hard time keeping yourselves in the path of rectitude.

Third, I would have you note it cost Lot the loss of his property and most of his family.

His property in Sodom went up in the flames and also some of his children. His wife turned to a pillar of salt in her covetous, backward look, and the two daughters that escaped with their father only live in history which commemorates their shame.

Lot's choice was based upon covetousness. For the sake of a few paltry dollars he picked his family up and moved them into a moral desert. Lot did not seem to care how poor the church was just so that the farm was good and rich. It was a good place to raise cattle but a poor place to raise children. Lot made good with his cattle but made a dismal failure with his children. The choice of this father was in some measure responsible for the outcome of his family. Had Lot taken God into account in his temporal choices, the outcome of his family might have been different and the same, no doubt, could be said of many a family in this great country of ours. Had the fathers chosen Christ and led the way into the church while the children were in their imitative and formative period, they might not be on the broad way living lives of dissipation and disgrace. In point of time it is the duty of every father to lead the way into the kingdom. God said to Noah, not Mrs. Noah, "Come, thou, with all thy family into the ark." It is the duty of every father to say with one of old, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

When Lot received the information that the city of Sodom was going to be destroyed by fire, he did his best to get his children out of the city, but found it impossible to get them all out. Lot would have found it easier to have kept them out in the first place and so will we, as parents,

and the sooner we learn it the better off we will be, for it is easier to build than to rebuild, easier to store than restore, easier to form character than to reform character. Had we given more time to formation and information we would not need so much time for reformation.

Some of Lot's daughters were destroyed by fire, and it was they who married into rich, unbelieving families. Father and mother, listen to me! There is no surer way of losing our children to God, heaven and the church, other than to have them marry wrong. It is my opinion that we, as parents, are not as much concerned about the proper mating of our children as we should be.

To be sure we can not choose their companions but we can give advice. Many a girl is living in a miniature hell today because her parents did not show enough interest in her matrimony.

This matter of matrimony is a serious thing; so serious that if you make a mistake in it nothing but a funeral can relieve you.

Marriage, in some quarters, has become reduced to the auction block. Many a girl has been encouraged to marry the man who could give her the greatest number of servants and automobiles, or the man who has the biggest bank account. Too many girls are marrying for other causes than for love. I think indolence, avarice, laziness, lust and money are inducing about as many to marry as real love. Young lady, whatever you do, don't marry a man for his money. If you do, you will find it the hardest money you ever earned.

There are thousands of girls in our cities today who are holding themselves too cheaply. They are on the market for the first bidder, ready to pick up any Tom, Dick, or Harry for the price of an ice cream soda or a joyride. Some of you seem scared half to death lest you might become what the world irreverently calls an old maid, but let me say to you there are many things worse than being an old maid, and one of them is marrying the wrong man.

I meet a mother here and there who gives me the impression that she is more anxious to have her daughters married than the daughters are themselves. I don't know why it is, unless they are afraid they might have an old maid (laughter) on their hands for life.

Let me say to you now that I would rather have three old maid daughters on my hands than to have one foul-mouthed, cussing, cigarette-smoking, tobacco-chewing, card-playing, round-dancing, whisky-drinking, church-absenting, Christ-rejecting son-in-law on my hands all the rest of my life.

Many a young woman has been told that the young man she is keeping company with, because of so many bad habits, will not make her a suitable companion, to which she replies that she expects to reform him after they are married. I would say to you he would not marry you to reform you. Let him reform first and give him more than two weeks to see if it is going to take; give him at least two years. If a young man has become such a victim to bad habits at the age of twenty-five years that he will not give them up before you are married, then all your future attempts to get him to abandon them would be like trying to dam up Niagara Falls with toothpicks, or stopping up a Vesuvius with corn-cobs, or knocking a twentieth-century limited off the railroad track with a wheelbarrow.

If I were a young lady and a young man of this generation would ask me to marry him, he would have to furnish me with more than a marriage certificate. He would have to furnish me with a certificate of good health by some reliable doctor, and if you will demand this of him you may save yourself more trouble than a whole corps of hospital nurses can deliver you from after you are married.

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3

LOT'S CHOICE WAS A SELFISH CHOICE

Lot's choice was based upon present interest. The present is very attractive. It was to Esau; he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage and a few moments of physical gratification, but he is not the only one who sold out for a thrill. Birthrights are as plentiful on the market as second-hand automobiles.

The present was very attractive to the rich young ruler. Christ offered him treasures in heaven if he would abandon all and follow Him. But he was not interested in a remote good. Heaven with its sun-kissed hills, jeweled walls, harps of gold, ravishing songs of angels and deathless atmosphere didn't make any hit with him, and it doesn't make much of a hit with the youth of today.

You can talk to the young people about treasures in heaven until you are physically exhausted and they will say, "We are not interested in a remote good. Away with your heaven yonder. Entertain me now, picture show me now, picnic me now, dine me now, wine me now." The majority of the people can see only the things near by. The world is suffering from eye trouble -- from low visibility. You often hear the current phrase, "I see by the morning paper," and the morning paper is the only eye that multitudes have. What do they see? They see a catalog of crimes; for anything that breaks the Ten Commandments makes news for the editors. I would like to see the time come when editors would spread a man's virtues on the front page of their papers as readily as they will spread a man's vices.

The world is fast going blind. We need a vision, and a vision we must have or else break upon the rocks of materialism and infidelity. The black clouds of our dissipations are fast shutting out the light, and the ceaseless whirl of modern living is fast robbing us of God.

O God, give us a vision! Give it to us quick! Give that money-mad crowd a vision -- that stupid, worried, haggard crowd that are burning up with a lust for gold, that are like the swine of the field wallowing in the filth of their fleshly desires and reveling in a nightmare of stocks and bonds and mortgages, that crowd that have pushed God and heaven and the church out of their lives, that have dwarfed their souls to a mere nothing by their colossal money grasping, who have pursued the dollar with such speed and persistency that they have died of exhaustion. Then some preacher who had charge of the funeral told the group of sorrowing friends that assembled to pay the last tribute of respect, that by some peculiar stroke of divine providence this man has been

taken from our midst, when the facts are, providence had but little to do with it and had he told them the truth he would have told them that the man was kicked to death by the golden calf.

O God, give us a vision -- give that pleasure-seeking crowd a vision; that crowd that are more worried about their freckles than their sins -- more concerned about their standing in society than their standing before God -- more interested in the latest fad than in the plan of redemption, and that think more of McCall's than they do of the Bible, the Word of God.

O God, give those church members a vision-those theater-going, round-dancing, card-playing, novel-reading, tobacco-using, immodest-dressing church members. Let them see unless they are born again they can never see the kingdom of God.

Then, O God, give the unsanctified crowd a vision -- turn Thy Holy Light on their depravity as Thou didst Isaiah -- so much so that it caused him to cry out, "I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips."

Then, O God, give Thy ministering servants a vision! Make us soul winners and watchmen amid the closing scenes of this sin enslaved, devil-captured age in which we live. Help us to live on the mount of inspiration so close to the heart of God that we will view things from God's viewpoint. Set our hearts on fire by the Holy Ghost and make our mouths like Gatling guns and help us to unlimber sky artillery until the roar of the guns wakes the dead. Help us to fearlessly storm the ramparts of Satan with the dynamite from the skies. Enable us to rebuke folly, unmask hypocrisy and crowd carnality into a corner. Give us a backbone as big as a saw log, the vision of an Ezekiel, the fire of an Isaiah, the courage of a John the Baptist, and the passion of the Lord.

Make us prophets and not parrots; living voices and not phonographs. Save us from soft, sentimental preaching. Help us to take off our gloves, as did our fathers, and strike sin with sledge-hammer blows, wherever we find it, whether in the church or out of it.

Help Thy ministers to forget the future and be faithful to God in the present. Fill us full of daring and make us willing to flirt with defeat and play checkers with despair. Give us preachers who can forget finances, positions, and theological hair-splittings and psychological theories!

Give us ministers who will have the courage to face their little Ninevehs twice a week and preach the preaching that God bids them. Help us to see that no mutilated or bootleg religion will do for the time and day in which we live. So unctionize us, Thy ministering servants, that the crowd will go out from under our ministry feeling they have listened to men sent of God.

O God, give us this vision and give it to us now! Swing us back to things of value, clear the fog off the hills of our higher levels of living and help us to climb.

Help us to climb until the animal is all crowded into the corner. Help us to climb until the dross has all been extracted from our natures. Help us to climb until we are more hungry for God than we are for fame, ease or money. Help us to climb until the scales drop off our eyes, until the coldness melts out of our hearts.

In conclusion, I set before you one of two deaths, one of two lives, one of two resurrections, one of two eternities, one of two masters, Satan or Christ. Which will you choose? As a gospel minister and one who has been going to the full extent of his strength to say something that would cause you to think and turn to God, I am saying to you, "Choose Christ."

The Christian people everywhere who have tasted of the love of God and find the joy and peace of God surpassing anything they have found in sin are likewise saying to you, "Choose Christ."

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the trinity, the chief executive of the Godhead who has been pulling at your heart strings and convicting you of your sins and urging you to be saved, is also saying to you, "Choose Christ."

The ghastly monster, death, the clatter of whose hoofs can be heard upon the stones of time, waving his poisonous sting, is saying to you, "Choose Christ."

The curse, consequence, pain and penalty of a broken law which is waving its flaming sword over your defenseless head, waiting the command of infinite wisdom to cut you down, is also saying to you, "Choose Christ."

Lost souls writhing in hell's torment, with their fingers dripping infernal fire, are pointing to the cross of Christ and with all the eloquence of their depraved lips are saying to you, "Choose Christ."

The Judgment Day with its lightning flash, pealing thunder, reeling world, bleeding moon, howling demons, crying sinners and shouting saints are all saying to you, "Choose Christ."

Bright, shining angels, as they crowd the gilded galleries of the celestial world, are turning their radiant faces toward Calvary's cleansing fountain and with all the earnestness of their angelic voices are saying to you, "Choose Christ."

A host of loved ones who have gone on before are looking down upon us from the battlements of heaven, a darling mother, a godly father, a lovely sister, a beautiful babe, and they are all saying to you, "Choose Christ."

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THE END