

Vexed with Wickedness

It doesn't take much of a glance around us to see the wickedness that abounds. Murder, rape, and stealing are just a few examples that even those of the unbelieving world are appalled at. There are also sins of fornication and adultery, murder of the unborn, desecration of the Lord's Day, and blasphemy, to name just a few that are innumerable in the world. The world sees nothing wrong with these sins, and many churchgoers and religionists also willfully commit them. There are many ways in which the world seeks to justify these sins, as well. The churches of our day appear to be blending in with the world more and more, but this is not the word of God to us as his children.

We are surrounded by this wickedness in our neighborhoods, workplaces, grocery stores, everywhere it seems. We do not have the option that Lot had. In [Genesis 13](#) we learn that Abram and Lot had to separate because of strife between their servants, but he did not have to put himself in the middle of the wickedness of Sodom. We as Christians are placed here in the middle of the filth and wickedness of this world. We certainly are not in this world by accident or fate. We have been placed here by the eternal, determinate counsel of God. The Confession of Faith, Article 13 says, "We believe that the same God, after he had created all things, did not forsake them, or give them up to fortune or chance, but that he governs them according to his holy will..." We, as Christians, must not seek to remove ourselves from the world as many sects have done, and still do today. In [John 17:18](#) Christ prays "As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them." How are we sent, and what are we, as individuals, to do?

We, as 21st century Christians, cannot choose a physical land of Canaan to separate ourselves from the influences and temptations of the world; rather, God has instituted the church to which God's children must join themselves. In [I Corinthians 12](#), the apostle Paul teaches us that we are one body, and that each individual member is necessary for the body. We must not leave the body of believers as Lot and Abram separated ([Genesis 13:11](#)). Lot chose for himself the fertile plains, and in doing so made a conscious decision to place himself in the middle of the wickedness of Sodom. As Lot separated from Abram, he moved away from godly company. The direction Lot took teaches us why there was strife. It was because of greed on his part. It was sinful for Lot to separate from Abram, and there were serious consequences for Lot. Our attitude toward the church must be one of personal need, and we must be willing to sacrifice for it. The Confession of Faith, Article 28 says,

We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and that out of it there is no salvation, that no person, of whatsoever state or condition he

may be, ought to withdraw himself to live in a separate state from it; but that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it, maintaining the unity of the church; submitting themselves to the doctrine and discipline thereof; bowing their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ; and as mutual members of the same body, serving to the edification of the brethren, according to the talents God has given them.

This article goes on to speak of the consequences of separating from the church and the sacrifices that may be required for joining it. This article is not speaking merely of church membership, but of attendance, and participation as well. We will not know wickedness, unless we know the commands of scripture. Attendance to the preaching of the word is vitally important for holy living. Reverend Hoeksema in his *Reformed Dogmatics*, states, in light of [Romans 10:14, 15](#), “Through the preaching, therefore, you do not hear about Christ, but you hear him” (*Dogmatics*, 637). At this point, each one of us needs to critically inspect our own lives in light of scripture. Do we confess with David in [Psalm 26:8](#) “Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.” Do we diligently frequent the house of prayer? We must find a college, and then later in life, an occupation that does not take us away from the pure preaching of the Word. Our vacations need to be planned around worship with the body of Christ. We should be so repulsed by the wickedness of the world (and much of what calls itself the church), that we are driven to God’s house! If we take ourselves away from the preaching, we take ourselves away from Christ! Sometimes, even under the preaching of the Word, God’s people so grievously fall into sin that we need to hear a word of rebuke from fellow members. Even then, we may stubbornly persist in that sin so that we need the admonition and discipline of the church by the elders. We must not expect our fellow members or our elders to be responsible for our souls (as they truly are), if we choose to separate ourselves from the body of Christ. In that situation, they have no means to shepherd our souls. We must not look at this as some sort of restriction, but a blessed privilege. So we must seek the pure preaching of the word. But, all the knowledge of God’s Word that can be attained through hearing it preached is worth nothing unless it is ours personally and we live in light of it.

[Ezekiel 16:49](#) tells us of Sodom’s iniquity. We read “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.” Pride is the epitome of all sin. Pride exalts itself against laws and lawgivers. The Sodomites had much time that was spent for selfish indulgence. They withheld from the poor and were a very materialistic society. The situation in Sodom was a lot like that of our own society. It seems as though, in our day, the only reason anything is given to the poor is for self gratification and glorification. Sexual perversions and abominations abound. There is much laziness. Although we can look at a lot of sins ‘out there’, we

must focus on our own lives. Much of our time is wasted on some kind of irrelevant entertainment. This is our form of 'abundance of idleness'. It is easy to say that the movie theatre is a den of iniquity, but many of us take that into our own 'family' rooms in the form of a television. And even if we are careful about what we turn on, the godless filth and perversion of the commercials is enough to make one shudder. When we gather together as friends and families we must not spend our time drinking excessive amounts of alcohol and chattering mindlessly. Vexed with wickedness? No, we are numbed to it. We even entertain ourselves with it. This is how we pitch our spiritual tents toward Sodom. We are told in [II Peter 2:7](#) that Lot was vexed with the filthy conversation of Sodom. He sat in the gate and saw their deeds. He did not participate in the unlawful works of Sodom, and we must not take part in the unlawful deeds of our society either. We must diligently walk in godliness, keeping ourselves from pride, and preferring others before ourselves.

Lot endangered his own life by receiving the two angels into his home and refusing to allow the men of Sodom to carry out their plan. He was willing to give of himself for their safety. Giving of ourselves until it hurts is true giving. We have that example from the widow in [Mark 12:41-44](#), who cast in the two mites even though she was poor. The church of Christ today is filled with altogether too much materialism, and the desire for entertainment. We must truly strive to occupy our time with edifying activities rather than entertainment, and here are a few examples. We must be given to Christian hospitality, as Lot was. Family worship, singing included, is a necessary part of our spiritual growth. We must make it a priority to prepare for and attend our societies. Daily, personal Bible study and prayer are imperative. We must live faithfully in our households with love for one another. Let the children observe the godly examples of their parents and older siblings, rather than learning from the television. Read good books and periodicals. Space fails me to go on, but the heart of the matter is that every aspect of our lives must be dictated by the Word of God. Our lives must be visibly different than those of the world around us. Then we will have the courage to speak with those around us.

Lot did speak with those around him in the city of Sodom. He had a place among the elders of the city in the gate. When he rebuked them for their wicked desires, their reply is recorded in [Genesis 19:9](#). "And they said, Stand back. And they said again, this one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door." Lot's stinging word of sharp rebuke infuriated the men of Sodom. We may not stand by silently and watch wickedness carry on, either. That is approval by silence. Rather, scripture commands us to 'judge righteous judgments' ([John 7:24](#)). We must say with Peter and John after they were threatened in [Acts 4:17-21](#), "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard". We must

take special note, for we cannot speak about ourselves. Rather we speak that which we have seen and heard, namely, Christ. We have seen! We have heard! Not objectively, but personally. Christ was crucified, he died, he arose from the dead, and he is ascended. He is our hope! But, speaking this will cause us to be rejected. This is to be expected. [I John 3:13](#) tells us, “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.” If we live our lives in godliness, we will not be accepted. Our lives will be difficult, especially in the last days, but we do not rely on ourselves for wisdom, faith, or spiritual strength.

We are set apart from the world by God’s sovereign grace. God has made us different from the world, and he maintains that difference. It is impossible that we, if we are regenerated by the work of the Holy Spirit, would not practice the things God has commanded in his Word. Salvation begins with God’s grace, given to the elect and only to the elect, for Christ’s sake. The Holy Spirit applies salvation to us, and also conforms our desires to God’s word. Because good works are a privilege of salvation, they cannot earn anything towards our salvation. God is sovereign over our salvation. But, God is also sovereign over the wicked. Most of Lot’s family was destroyed because of their love of Sodom. Only Lot and two of his daughters were left. His house was destroyed, and he lost many possessions. Lot’s two daughters sinned wickedly as well, and by their father, produced reprobate children, Moab and Ammon. These were all consequences of Lot’s sinful decision to move toward Sodom. God decreed the sin of this righteous man, as well, to bring glory to his name. Ruth the Moabitess is the great grandmother of David, and Christ was born from the line of David. According to God’s counsel, this had to happen so that Christ could be born! God, the decreeing cause of sin, works all things to the salvation of his elect. Our sins are not excused, but, rather, they are paid for in Christ. Christ says in [John 10:27, 28](#), “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” God is truly praised when we live in this world as strangers and pilgrims, vexed with the wickedness that we live in the midst of. Let us pitch our tents with the true church of Christ.

Works Cited

Hoeksema, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1966

Quotations from the Confession of Faith, or Belgic Confession, can be found in *The Three Forms of Unity and the Ecumenical Creeds* Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, reprinted 2002.

Quotations from the *Bible* are taken from the King James Version.

