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Studies in Genesis

(Leaflet 15)

ABRAHAM AND LOT

Genesis 13:5—14:24; 18:1—19:38

When God called Abram, saying, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house," He meant exactly what He said. And Abram should never have taken Lot, his nephew, along with him. Everything we read about Lot brought trouble and grief to Abram—everything but one all-important fact, and that was Lot's faith in the God of Abram; for he was justified, made righteous, by the grace of God.

Abram should not have taken his father with him when he left his native city of Ur; and it was not until his father died that he went all the way to the land of Canaan. God wanted Abram separated from his heathen country and from his kindred, even from Lot who believed in God, because God knew that these associations would hinder his growth in grace and his testimony before the godless world.

And what sorrow Lot brought to the heart of his uncle! Threatened strife; the display of a selfish nature; worldly-mindedness; capture at the hand of his enemies; the loss of all his material wealth, his wife and sons-in-law; and, in the end, shame and disgrace unspeakable!

By way of contrast, Abram's beauty of soul shines forth in a striking manner. But how much better it would have been if Abram had gone all the way in obedience in the beginning, separating himself from his "kindred," even as God had told him.

It costs something to give up home and loved ones for Jesus' sake, as many a child of Abram can testify. I am thinking of two beautiful Jewish girls whom I knew when they were in their early twenties. Both were members of orthodox Hebrew homes, where the very name of Christ

was hated. Both were gloriously saved by faith in the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus. And both faced the trying ordeal of giving up home and loved ones, or keeping silent about their salvation in Christ.

One of those Jewish girls endured an all-night grilling by her family, her back literally against the wall. But as she stood there throughout the long hours, threatened with being disinherited, cast out, her God-given courage did not waver. And out she went the next morning, alone, yet not alone; for with her went the One who had suffered ignominy and shame and the cruel cross for her. That Jewish girl finished her course in The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago; and today she is a home missionary in a very difficult field, leading souls to her Messiah and Lord.

The other Jewish girl spent two weeks at the same Bible school, and apparently was determined to give up all for her Saviour. But she was engaged to be married to an orthodox Hebrew boy. He made her fair promises, agreeing to permit her to worship God in her own way. Against the counsel of Christian friends, that girl did not wait until the young man she loved was saved; she did not wait for God to show her His will; she was "unequally yoked together" with an unbeliever, even a bitter enemy of her Lord. It was only a matter of days before he forbade her going to a Christian house of worship. And she even had to hide her New Testament, and read it on the sly.

That was some nine or ten years ago. I have often wondered if that Jewish girl has grown cold and indifferent to her Lord. I know she is saved. But one thing is certain; if she has given a testimony for Christ, her life has been filled with bitterness and persecution. How much better it would have been if, like the other Jewish girl, she had separated herself from all earthly ties, rather than grieve her Lord, and learn the bitterness of soul that follows compromise by a child of God.

And Abram might have been spared many heartaches if he had left his "kindred," even his nephew, Lot, in Chaldea as God had said. Yet God overrules our failures and our sins for our good and for His glory if we truly love Him.

And even through the trials which came to Abram because of Lot, he was brought into an ever closer walk with God.

The story of these trials and blessings is our lesson for today. It covers portions of several chapters, which we shall follow through to the end of Lot's sad fall into sin and shame. Necessarily, we must pass over some of the most wonderful and one of the most tragic experiences in the life of Abraham; but these we shall note, in passing, in their chronological order; and in future lessons we shall go back to fill in the details of the story. What we want to see today is that God has some very searching lessons for us, taken from the experiences of these two men who were justified by faith in the promised Saviour. One was a consecrated, as well as a redeemed, soul; the other was saved, but mercenary and selfish and out of the will of God.

ABRAM'S UNSELFISH OFFER AND LOT'S SELFISH CHOICE

Lot had evidently gone down to Egypt with Abram (13:1); and both men had become rich, possibly by the sale of their flocks and herds, as well as from gifts which Pharaoh may have presented to Abram when he "intreated" him "well" for Sarai's sake.

"And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. . . And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents" (13:2, 5).

"And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land" (13:6, 7).

That was a tragic situation—strife between the servants of kinsmen, both of whom trusted in the only true God, while the heathen Canaanite and Perizzite looked on! What a testimony! Abram, at least, realized that this could not continue. Possibly he knew that if it did, there would be strife also between Lot and Abram himself—kinsmen. Accordingly, Abram made a most unselfish and generous offer

to Lot; and even when Lot took advantage of his generosity, Abram seems not to have objected. His eye was fixed upon the heavenly city. He knew that God had given him the land of Canaan. And he was willing to wait for it, rather than be the center of quarrelling and strife.

“And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left” (13:8, 9).

Here we see Abram, the man of faith, not the man who had gone down to Egypt and told a falsehood. Since then, he had been talking to the Lord; his fellowship, no longer broken, was fully restored. That is why he could say to Lot, “You take anything you like, and I will take what is left.”

My Christian friend, could you say that? It takes great faith! Could you settle a dispute by taking the short end of the bargain, and let a man you know is wrong take the best thing? That is hard to do. Lot did not belong in the land. Abram could have said: “Lot, God promised me this land. You are out of place. Don’t you think it would be a good idea if you would take all your possessions and go elsewhere, leaving me where God put me?” But no; Abram wanted to avoid a quarrel. He had God’s blessing—and faith. And he represents the man who believes God, whose real and abiding possessions are in heaven, not on earth. Lot had his earthly possessions; and while he was born again, yet he did not “lay up treasures in heaven.” That is why he lived to see the day when all his earthly possessions were burned up, and he was a sad, broken, disgraced man.

“And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou

comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other" (13:10, 11).

LOT'S LOVE OF "THE WORLD"

Not only was Lot selfish, but he cared more for the well-watered plains of Jordan and the money they would bring to him than he did for a separated walk with God. He "lifted up his eyes" and saw the possibility of getting material wealth in this fertile valley that was "like the land of Egypt." Now Egypt, in the Bible, is a type of the Christ-rejecting world; Canaan is a type of heaven. Lot had been in Egypt long enough to want "the flesh-pots of Egypt." Little did he care that Sodom and Gomorrah were wicked cities. And, therefore, we read that

"Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom (or, as the Revised Version renders it, 'moved his tent as far as Sodom'). But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (13:12, 13).

What a terrible place, in which to rear his children! No wonder his two daughters fell into gross evil. No wonder his sons-in-law were destroyed with the wicked men of Sodom, spurning God's gracious deliverance. No wonder Lot's wife yearned for the things of Sodom more than the will of God. For Lot "moved his tent as far as Sodom," even though "the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

I wonder, my Christian friends, if you and I are afraid of the God-dishonoring, Christ-rejecting, Spirit-resisting world as we ought to be? People often ask me, "Is it wrong for me to do this? Is there any harm in my going there?" If the doubtful thing has the marks of the world upon it, God's answer is:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with un-

righteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? . . . Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:14-18).

On one occasion some young people were going into a coal mine on a sight-seeing tour. As they were putting on old garments, one of the number insisted on wearing her beautiful white dress. She asked the guide if there was a rule against her doing as she pleased, to which he replied, "Certainly not; but if you go into the mine wearing a white dress, you surely will not come out clean and white."

Our all-wise God knows what is best for our own spiritual growth and for our testimony before a godless world when He tells us to keep our garments "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15).

ABRAM REWARDED FOR FULL OBEDIENCE

"After that Lot was separated from him" (13:14), God once more talked to Abram. By this time the command to leave his "kindred" had been fully obeyed. And how good God was to reassure His child, even adding explicit details not hitherto found in the inspired record. Read Gen. 13:14-18, noting that here God promised anew all the land which Abram could see, from every direction; that He promised it to Abram and "his seed for ever"; and that He promised to make Abram's "seed as the dust of the earth for multitude."

Here also we see again the "tent" and the "altar unto the Lord" in "Hebron," which means "fellowship." So Abram's prayer life had led to fellowship with God. He was growing in grace. He had reached Hebron!

My Christian friend, is that your experience? God intends that it should be. You know some people pray

sometimes. In stress or strain or trouble they pray, but they know nothing of that abiding, constant fellowship which God wants us to have. The men and women who know the secret of "the joy of the Lord," and whom He can use to His own glory, are those who do not always need to get alone to pray. At any task, as they ride the cars, or go about the shops or sweep and dust and cook and sew, they lift their hearts to God in prayer and praise. That is fellowship. And that is the sure way to know His perfect will for every problem, great or small.

"Lot moved his tent as far as Sodom," but Abram
"dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and
built there an altar unto the Lord."

LOT, THE CAPTIVE—ABRAM, THE DELIVERER

Thus it came to pass that, when God had a serious task for Abram to perform, in order to free Lot from captivity, Abram was prepared for it. If you feel that God has no work for you to do, my friend, perhaps it is because you are not ready for it. There is very much to be done! There are fifteen hundred million heathen in the world, bowing down to idols of wood and stone. Surely we can not face our Lord at "the judgment seat of Christ" and say that there was nothing to do. Shall He have to say to us, "I could not give you anything to do for me because you were not ready for the task"? It is a blessed experience to keep in such constant fellowship with God that He can speak to our hearts at any moment, saying, "There is a lost soul, to whom I want you to tell the story of salvation." Does a whole day go by without God's having an opportunity to say that to you? To me?

I think Abram was having a wonderful time. Prayer had become the habit of his life. It had developed into fellowship. In his pilgrim character he had his altar.

But poor Lot! Nothing is said of his altar or his prayer! Because he *was* a believer in the God of Abram, justified by faith, he was "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)" (II Peter 2:7, 8).

And now he was taken captive in battle, a prisoner in the hands of the enemy. Was God dealing with him, trying to lead him to seek the presence of men who were not "wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly"? And yet, even after Abram delivered him from his captors, he went right back to Sodom, sat in the gate as one of the chief men of that wicked city, vexing "his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds" and with their "filthy conversation," or "lascivious life," as the Revised Version translates it. You see, his material possessions and his family were in Sodom! His treasures were on earth, not in heaven.

Let us read carefully the story of his captivity, recorded in Gen. 13:1-16. There were two confederacies of kings, four against five, which fought against each other. The four named in verse 1 "made war with" the five of verse 2. And the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were among the five.

"All these joined together in the vale of Siddim (the same is the Salt Sea)" (verse 3, Revised Version).

"Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled" (verse 4).

That is, the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and their confederates served, as subjects, for twelve years; rebelled in the thirteenth year; then were conquered in the fourteenth year by the confederacy of four kings. They "joined battle in the vale of Siddim . . . four kings with five" (verses 4-9).

"And the vale of Siddim was full of slime pits ('bitumen pits,' R. V.); and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain. And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way. And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed" (verses 10-12).

So that was Lot's sad plight—a captive, robbed of his earthly possessions, his king also a prisoner of war.

But read verses 13-16, which follow. A messenger, "one that had escaped," ran to tell "Abram the Hebrew."

"And when Abram heard that his brother (in the sense of 'kinsman') was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people."

Again, Abram's loyalty to his erring, selfish, worldly-minded nephew shows us something of the patriarch's courage and sweetness of spirit. He might have been vindictive toward Lot; or indifferent, to say the least.

Something else here catches our eye. Abram took with him to battle "three hundred and eighteen . . . trained servants, born in his own house." Someone has suggested that he must have left yet others at home to protect and care for his flocks and herds. How abundantly God had blessed him!

We can well imagine how grateful the king of Sodom must have been, as he "went out to meet" Abram "after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him" (verse 17).

And, again, we see the magnanimity of Abram as he refused the generous offer of the king of Sodom to take all the spoils of the battle, leaving only "the persons" to the king (verses 21-24).

And yet again, we hear Abram bearing witness before the king of Sodom to his faith in "the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth" (verse 22). Doubtless this was a heathen king; and to him Abram spoke of his God! It seems also that Abram wanted him to know that his Lord would take care of all his temporal needs; for he said,

"I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich: save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me" (verses 23,24).

And this is the story of how Abram delivered Lot and the king of Sodom. There have been critics who denied that the kings mentioned in this record ever existed. But their foolish arguments have been silenced by the archaeologists, who have found, for example, that there was a whole dynasty of kings named "Chedorlaomer," and that other kings mentioned here were men of history.

There was another highly significant event connected with Abram's "return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him." And that event was the meeting with "Melchizedek king of Salem," and "priest of the most high God" (verse 18). Because Melchizedek is one of the most wonderful types of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Priest and King, we shall save a detailed study of these verses and related portions of Scripture until our next lesson. Here we shall note only that Melchizedek "brought forth bread and wine"; that he blessed Abram; and that to him Abram gave "tithes of all," as he returned victorious over his enemies.

Our next lesson will be filled with deeply spiritual truths, as we enter into the study of the High Priestly work of our Lord, foreshadowed by this king-priest who met Abram many centuries ago. So also will be the marvelous teaching of chapter fifteen, concerning God's covenant with Abram; of chapter sixteen, with its heart-searching lessons about Hagar and Ishmael; and of chapter seventeen, with its record of another meeting of God with Abram. But if we finish the story today of Abram's association with Lot, we must pass over these chapters until future lessons, in order to consider the last, tragic events in the life of Lot. They are told in chapters eighteen and nineteen. But before we go into this part of the record, let us be sure to read carefully chapters fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen to get the continued story.

ABRAM INTERCEDING FOR SODOM AND LOT

Thirteen years after Ishmael was born, God had appeared to Abram again, not only changing his name to Abraham, but, among other things, telling him also that the promised son of Sarah was soon to be born, and that his name should be called "Isaac."

And yet again "the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day" (18:1). How often God came down to talk to Abram! And it was on this occasion that He told His faithful servant of the impending destruction of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. For He said,

"Shall I hide from Abram that thing which I do . . . ?"

As Friend to friend, God talked with Abram; told him His plans; and, for Abram's sake, spared Lot. That is why Abram is called in the Scriptures "The Friend of God." (See II Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23.) All this reminds us of what our Lord told the eleven disciples in His Farewell Discourse:

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15).

"What a Friend we have in Jesus!" Oh, that we were more like Abram, inviting Him to talk "with us by the way"! But let us read all of Gen. 18:17-19 to see why God made known His plans to His "friend." It was because Abram was to be the channel of blessing to "all the nations," because he taught his children to "keep the way of the Lord," and because God knew that He Himself would bring to pass His great purpose through this man whom He had called out of idolatry to serve Him. How many searching lessons are bound up in these brief verses! But we must hurry on.

As we read carefully the story of chapter eighteen, we note that, when "the Lord appeared" to Abram as he sat

"in the tent door in the heat of the day . . . he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him" (18:1, 2). Two of these seem to be the "two angels" who went on "to Sodom at even" (19:1); but one of them was certainly the Lord, who tarried to talk to Abram, His "friend." This seems clear, as we read from 18:20-22 that, after the Lord told Abram of the impending doom of Sodom and Gomorrah, "the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the Lord." It was after this that "there came two angels to Sodom at even."

Of course, we know that angels often appeared to God's saints in the form of men. And we also need to remember that the expression, "the angel of the Lord," so often found in the Old Testament, always refers to our Lord Jesus Christ, who appeared to men in angelic form before His incarnation in Bethlehem's manger. Certainly Abraham recognized Him as "the Lord," before whom he "stood" and prayed for Lot and Sodom.

Before we consider this prayer of intercession, let us go back once more to the opening verses of this chapter, to note the oriental hospitality which Abram provided to these "three men" who "stood by him." Let us note also the fellowship they had one with another. It is all very beautiful, this meeting of Abraham, "the friend of God," with the Lord he loved.

And then we read of God's repetition of His promise that Sarah should have a son; of Sarah's laughter—for she was old; of the Lord's rebuke to her; and of Sarah's frightened denial of her unbelief. How we love the reassurance of God's power as expressed in His own convincing words, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" The birth of Isaac was to be a miracle. And our miracle-working God is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8)!

And now let us read to the end of the chapter, noting especially Abraham's intercession for Sodom—its earnestness, its faith, its importunity, its avail. First he prayed that God would spare Sodom if He found "fifty righteous" there; then forty-five—forty—thirty—twenty—ten. Each

time God heard and answered his prayer, but Sodom was so wicked that not even ten "righteous" persons, believers in God, could be found there!

"And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place" (19:33).

My Christian friend, there are millions living today in a veritable Sodom, spiritually. Have we made intercession for them, as Abraham did in his day? We can not; we dare not shake off this responsibility lightly!

THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH AND LOT'S DELIVERANCE

Whether God brought about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah through natural causes, such as an "explosion of gas," the "soil soaked with bitumen," or by some other miracle, makes little difference to the man of faith. In any event, it was the righteous judgment of God upon unspeakable sin, which He could not permit to go on unchecked.

That the destruction of these cities of the plain was a fact of history, is certain. Among the many references of Scripture to the historicity of this event, we mention here only two. One was spoken by our Lord Himself when He likened the corruption that will exist on earth in the end of this age to that of "the days of Lot." Then having warned persecuted Israel to flee from "the great tribulation" that shall come upon them, He added these words, "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:28-32; compare Matt. 24:16-22).

The other New Testament reference to Sodom and Gomorrah, which we would mention here, is the one made by Jude when he, too, guided by the Holy Spirit, was warning of judgment to come upon the apostates "in the last days." (See Jude 7.)

Abraham's heart must have been heavy as he went "early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord," and witnessed the awful destruction of the cities of the plain. But Lot was spared, for Abraham's sake; and yet what tragedy followed his deliverance!

Let us read chapter nineteen, noting the visit of the "two angels" to Sodom "at even" as Lot "sat in the gate," a seat of authority. The vile intent of the wicked men of the city toward these angels, as recorded in verse 5, was the same as that described in Rom. 1:27. Lot's unthinkable words to the men of Sodom concerning his own daughters, indicating his own contamination of heart by evil associations (verse 8); the mocking of his sons-in-law as they refused to heed his warning, showing that Lot's testimony before them meant nothing; his own lingering and the hesitancy of his wife and daughters to flee; his arguing with the angels as to where he should flee; and his wife's evident longing to turn back to the doomed city—these are some of the marks of evil, unbelief, and barrenness of soul, even in the life of "righteous Lot," righteous not because of his own conduct, but because he believed in God for salvation.

THE AWFUL FRUITION OF LOT'S SIN

You will have to read silently of the terrible sin that marks the close of this tragic record; for it is one we hardly care to discuss (19:30-38). And it ends the life story of a selfish, mercenary man who, in his later years, lost his earthly possessions, his wife, and his sons-in-law; and, as an out-cast from decent society, "dwelt in a cave." Moreover, his posterity was one, of which he might well have been ashamed; and these Moabites and Ammonites became bitter enemies of Israel.

Oh, beloved, how it behooves us who have been declared "righteous" before God, justified by faith in the shed blood of His only begotten Son—how it behooves us to live a Spirit-filled life, separated from the evils of this present world by His cleansing power!

"JUST LOT"—"THAT RIGHTEOUS MAN"

We would not close our lesson today without reading again the marvelous words of II Peter 2:6-8. If there ever was a man who illustrates the teaching of all Scripture that salvation is only by the grace of God, that man was Lot. Surely he had no works, of which to boast. We need not re-

hearse further all his sins and failures and weaknesses. And yet God says of him, through Peter, that He "delivered just Lot . . . that righteous man." "Just" means "justified." And Lot was justified by faith in the promised Redeemer.

Surely his life story forever settles the question of the eternal security of the believer. If his salvation had depended on his own "good works," poor Lot could not have been saved—and kept saved. Nor did his salvation depend upon his feelings; for he was not happy in Sodom; "his righteous soul" was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked."

No; Lot's salvation and yours and mine came as the unmerited gift of our loving Lord. God forbid that we should grieve Him as Lot did, rob the world of the testimony of a life that can lead sinners to the Saviour, and rob ourselves of the joy of the Lord in daily fellowship with Him. But let us always remember that even our faith is "the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

"The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:4-6).

May the God of Abraham and the God of Lot help us to realize that we have been "justified by faith" to serve Him—not for our own selfish desires, but for His glory. He has called us "friends." May we so live that, like Abraham, we may show others "what a Friend we have in Jesus."

The first part of the document is a letter from the Secretary of the State Department to the Secretary of the War Department. The letter is dated August 1, 1918, and is addressed to the Secretary of the War Department, Washington, D. C. The letter is signed by the Secretary of the State Department, Robert Lansing.

The letter discusses the proposed transfer of the War Relocation Authority to the War Relocation Administration. The letter states that the War Relocation Authority was established by Executive Order on May 16, 1942, and has since that time been operating as an independent agency. The letter suggests that it would be more appropriate for the War Relocation Authority to be placed under the War Relocation Administration, which is a part of the War Relocation Authority.

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