

Genesis 13:5-14:24 • Saving Believers

Introduction

One of the unfortunate truths of the Parable of the Sower which we see played out in the course of our life is that there are backsliders, those who don't always remain committed to God's Word and ways. We need to understand not only how this happens in order to beware of the pitfalls and warning signs, but to engage the right strategy to rescue others when the opportunity arises. Abram and Lot represent two types of believers living in a world surrounded by its pressures and influences where one succumbs but the other does not. The question here focuses on which of these examples you identify with most and what you might do to return to the right direction.

⁵Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together. ⁷And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land.

[Read 13:5-7]

Q: What might be particularly unusual about this problem as far as the nature of most problems recorded between people in the Bible?

A: It was not a conflict born out of trial or temptation but prosperity. In spite of being materially and visibly blessed by God they found themselves in conflict.

Point: People often believe if they are financially well-off it automatically means they are spiritually well-off. Why is this not necessarily true? How does this reinforce the biblical notion that we're to maintain our Christianity under all conditions?

Q: Why might this conflict between two believers be contrasted to the fact that "the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling in the land"?

A: One thing it suggests is that their personal witness was at stake, another might be that they were "in" the world but not supposed to be "of" the world – as believers they were supposed to behave differently than the rest.

Application: We're not only supposed to be right witnesses of God when everything is going wrong, we're also supposed to be right witnesses when everything is going well.

⁸So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. ⁹Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left."

¹⁰Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere—this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. ¹¹So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. ¹²Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom. ¹³Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the

[Read 13:8-18]

Q: What is the most prominent difference between Abram and Lot from a biblical point of view?

A: Whereas Lot acted out of self-interest, Abram demonstrated the greater love of God within him by denying himself. Abram was not only generous and peaceable, seeking Lot's welfare above his own, but in alignment with the precepts of Scripture.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

Romans 12:10-11

do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Philippians 2:4

Q: How would we likewise measure Lot's character from a biblical point of view?

A: Even though he is younger and should submit to his elder, Lot places himself ahead of Abraham.

LORD.

¹⁴The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; ¹⁵for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. ¹⁶I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. ¹⁷Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.” ¹⁸Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

1 Peter 5:5

Q: How will the events that unfold after this reveal to us that there is probably an issue of unresolved pride in the case of Lot?

A: It's the fulfillment of Proverbs 16:18, “*Pride goes before destruction*”.

Q: What does Lot do in v.10 which in biblical terms is often an indication of someone acting in unbelief rather than according to faith in God?

A: He “*lifted up his eyes*” without consulting God. It's the Old Testament way of describing some who trusts more in their own sight.

Q: How does v.10 seem to confirm this by showing us how the land looked through Lot's eyes?

A: It's described as “*like the land of Egypt*”. “*Egypt*” is one of the most prominent Old Testament metaphors for the old life, for living according to one's own desires instead of God's.

Q: So Lot is plagued by pride (v.9) unbelief (v.10a), and worldliness. (v.10b) What additional characteristic is revealed in v.11?

A: His selfishness. Lot's success was actually due in large part to Abram's kindness and the godly principles Abram clung to, but when the opportunity arose Lot proved he was more interested in serving himself than anyone else.

Application: *We might be seeing some of the reasons that God wanted Abram to separate from Lot and why the strife between their herdsmen may have represented greater underlying spiritual issues. But how should we be like Abram in seeking to be the best witness and choose love over all regardless of the circumstances?*

Q: How is the poor quality of Lot's spirituality ultimately revealed in his choice?

A: First Lot looked toward Sodom. This is how most sin-related problems begin, by fixing one's eyes and thoughts on the wrong thing. Then Lot moved toward Sodom. Before long Lot was actually living in Sodom. (Gen. 14:12; 19:1)

Q: Is there anything to be made of the fact that in v.11 it states that Lot “journeyed eastward”?

A: It represents walking against the light and towards the darkness. It's a biblical metaphor for a life going in the wrong direction.

*But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn,
That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.
Proverbs 4:18*

Point: *Lot represents becoming a friend of the world, Abram becoming a friend of God. Whereas Lot was getting further and further away from the Lord, Abram was drawing closer.*

Q: So what in v.14 reveals a key difference in Abram versus what we already learned about Lot in v.10?

A: It was God who told Abram to lift up his eyes and behold the entire land.

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Point: *Worldly people claim what their eyes can see while people of faith claim what God's eyes can see.*

Q: What is different in how the land was apportioned to Abram?

A: Whereas Lot took a part of the land for himself, Abram was given all the land by God.

Point: *God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him.*

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:33

Q: So God drew Abram closer to Him and blessed him with the land. What else did God bless on Abram's part?

A: God promises to bless Abram's "seed" or family. (v.16) It's quite a contrast to Lot's family which will eventually either be destroyed or defiled while living in a cave. (Gen. 19:12-38)

Q: What is the greater teaching of v.17 where Abram traverses the land?

A: Every believer must step out and claim God's promises by faith. This will all be affirmed again to Israel through Joshua when they finally take possession of the land.

"Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.

Joshua 1:3

Q: So what is the most obvious difference between Abram and Lot as revealed in v.18 by Abram's move to the "oaks of Mamre"?

A: Lot lost his altar (representing right worship of God) and would soon lose his dwelling; Abram not only still had his dwelling but his altar.

Application: *It pays to walk by faith and trust the Word of God.*

¹And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, ²that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). ³All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). ⁴Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but the thirteenth year they rebelled. ⁵In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim and the Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶and the Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness. ⁷Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and conquered all the country of the Amalekites, and also the

[Read 14:1-12]

Q: What began as a conflict in 13:5-7, and was resolved by Lot's personal choice in 13:8-18, has now resulted in what condition for Lot?

A: It's resulted in his becoming a captive.

Q: Is this story a kind of fairy tale or legend, just some kind of literary fable?

A: No, archeology has confirmed the historical accuracy of this account of the very first war recorded in the Bible.

Q: If this historical event also has a greater spiritual meaning, what was Lot's initial mistake and what does it represent?

A: He followed the path of friendship with the world.

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

James 4:4

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Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar.⁸ And the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah and the king of Admah and the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) came out; and they arrayed for battle against them in the valley of Siddim,⁹ against Chedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goiim and Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five.¹⁰ Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell into them. But those who survived fled to the hill country.¹¹ Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed.¹² They also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom.

Q: What is the next step beyond “friendship” if you don’t turn back from it and continue onward into a deeper relationship?

A: Friendship with the world evolves into love of the world.

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

1 John 2:15-17

Q: Biblically speaking, what inevitably results from being devoted in love to something?

A: You become conformed to it.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2

Q: And what is the inevitable end result of being conformed to the world?

A: Judgment with the world.

But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

1 Corinthians 11:32

Application: Lot thought Sodom was a place of peace and protection but it was actually a place of warfare and danger. Saints are rarely captured by the world “suddenly” – they enter places of danger by degrees. With Lot it all began when he adopted Egypt as his standard and began to walk by sight instead of faith, ultimately preferring the dwellings of the world to the tents of God. How does this describe yourself or someone you know in terms of backsliding into sin or the ways of the world?

¹³Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram.¹⁴ When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.¹⁵ He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus.¹⁶ He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people.

¹⁷Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).¹⁸ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and

[Read 14:13-24]

Q: What might be significant about the physical dwellings in which Lot and Abram lived in respectively?

A: Whereas Lot lived in the city, Abram lived in tents. From a worldly perspective it would appear that Lot was more protected and that any forces able to overcome a city would most certainly be able to take care of simple tent-dwellers.

Q: But why was Abram able to rescue Lot?

A: Because in spite of the appearances of a city versus a tent, Abram was in the true place of strength being in God's will.

Application: Only the separated believer has the power to help the backslider, and it's to such a faithful believer that a backslider turns to in times of trouble.

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

1 John 5:4

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wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. ¹⁹He blessed him and said,

“Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”

He gave him a tenth of all.

²¹The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.”

²²Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, ²³that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ ²⁴I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share.”

Q: By now we can probably see all the spiritual issues faced by Lot, but what was the greatest trial now faced by Abram?

A: Abram faced great temptation in meeting the King of Sodom after his victory. The King of Sodom wanted to strike a bargain with Abram to get him to compromise by accepting the wealth of Sodom.

Application: As pointed out previously, the wealth of Sodom was viewed in the same context as Egypt, the biblical representation of a life forsaking God for one's own desires. This was a spiritual snare Lot may have entangled himself in but which Abram avoided. Abram did not go down the path of friendship of the world and therefore did not wind up in the same place as Lot.

Q: But what greater “treasure” from a spiritual point of view was at risk?

A: Accepting financial reward would have put his testimony at risk. It probably would have been said of him, “Abram rescued Lot for what he could get out of it, not out of faith and love. He may not live in Sodom, but he benefits from the goods of Sodom nonetheless.” The greater treasure was keeping his personal testimony intact.

Q: So why does Abram instead honor the King of Salem?

A: Hebrews 5-7 makes it very clear that Melchizedek (“king of righteousness”) is a type of Christ our heavenly High Priest. As King of “Salem” (“king of peace”) peace through His righteousness is made possible through the cross. This is all a picture of choosing to follow Christ rather than Satan.

Q: Although Lot is ultimately rescued, why is it probably safe to say that Lot probably didn't fully learn and apply the right lesson from all that happened?

A: Lot will return to live in Sodom.

Point: Where the heart is, one's body is sure to follow.

Overall Application

We can't make people's choices for them, only our own. But by choosing to remain personally faithful to God's Word and ways we're not only remaining in a right relationship with Christ, but attaining to the best possible position to come to the aid of our brothers and sisters in Christ. One of the most important examples of Abram in this account is how he expressed His love for God by executing his love for others, particularly Lot. This is definitely an example of what it means to fulfill the entire Word of God by being obedient to the commandment given by Christ to love one another. Throughout the entire situation Abram remained not just an effective witness to Lot, but to all those around them who witnessed how they handled the situation and was able to rescue a backslider without endangering himself.