

Abraham (Part Nine)

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I never in my born days thought we would be getting this much material out of Abraham. But then again I guess its good for us to learn some things from our father. There is plenty here in the Bible about him. I cannot say there is more written about him than anyone else because surely there is more written about Moses and about David than there is about Abraham. But these are foundational things with regard to Abraham. There are things that impact on everybody's life because he is the father of the faithful. He is the first one whose life is recorded, a life that is lived by faith. So there is a very great deal that we can learn from him, and we are going to continue that tonight.

In Genesis chapters 18 and 19, his nephew Lot comes back into the picture again, and it almost seems as though Lot has to be dealt with before Isaac can be born, and the promise can be fulfilled in earnest. Now looking at Lot, he was in the picture once before. But it almost seems that, at least in regard to Abraham living by faith, that one by one, we might call them nagging or chronic problems are being disposed of as he continues in his life of faith.

I think it is interesting to notice that, at least as far as this story shows, there is no sudden disconnecting from these problems, but rather a gradual disappearance of them, they do not just disappear quickly. You can see this actually beginning very early in the story of Abraham beginning whenever he was still in Mesopotamia. Then he went up there to Austria during the persecutions that were occurring in Mesopotamia, and then he had to return to Mesopotamia again, and once again persecutions arose.

It was during that second period when he went back to Mesopotamia that God gave his calling, but Abraham appears to not have had enough control to break himself free. Remember how we read in Genesis 12 that Terah took Abram, and they journeyed from Ur to Haran. The Bible certainly shows that Abram was not yet in full control of things. He had to wait until Terah was out of the way, but finally Terah dies and Abraham leaves for Canaan.

Well, he finally gets into Canaan and in the very next chapter he is in Egypt. It was not all that profitable spiritually, but he and Lot were able to finally break themselves free from Egypt with some major sense of embarrassment. They got a severe tongue-lashing from Pharaoh because of the trick that Abram and Sarah pulled on him in telling him half-truth and half lie with regards to Sarah's relationship with Abram. But they were able to get themselves out of there and back once again on the path in Canaan.

Then we find that there is a dispute between Lot's herdsmen and Abram's herdsmen. The dispute is resolved by Lot separating himself from Abram and choosing the nice, juicy plains where Sodom and Gomorrah were located. So, at this point, it seems that Lot is out of the picture. He was no longer a problem to Abram anymore, but he becomes a problem once again because the Assyrian kings come down and they run off with nephew Lot and Abram has to go chasing after Lot again. All kinds of distractions keep coming in from the sides and causing Abram a number of problems. Well Lot is rescued, and Abram and Sarah plot this scheme with Hagar. It seemed like a good carnal solution to their problems, why not just have a child by Hagar? They had a child alright, but problems arise between the two ladies. So, Hagar is sent off by Sarah and it looks as though they are getting rid of that problem. But no, the Lord meets Hagar on the way and He sends her back. That problem is not going to disappear so easily as Abram might have thought.

Another chapter intervenes there, and low and behold, back to chapter 18 and here comes Lot like a thundering herd once again. Not directly in chapter 18 (we will not really get to him until chapter 19), but chapter 18 is a lead-in to chapter 19, and once again, Lot is in Abram's care as a consistent family problem. But at least in these two chapters we are going to see the last of Lot and another problem will disappear from Abram's life.

As I mentioned, these problems that Abraham has, there does not seem to be a rapid disconnect from them. I think that there is a very valuable lesson in them for anyone trying to live their life by faith. For anyone who has a valid connection to the eternal God, who has been begotten by His Spirit, and is striving to live up to whatever pleases that God, eventually being in the Kingdom of God, the lesson is that despite the fact that you have that

connection with that God, and He is a miracle-working God, and has all power and nothing can stand in His way, our problems do not quickly, miraculously, suddenly have solutions that causes them to just disappear and fade away.

What we see is what Abraham experienced. Slow, gradual, disconnecting from them, that is, from the problem. The method that God seems to use is not rapid transformation from begettal to maturity, but just like it is in real life, gradual, slow, almost immeasurable growth. Sometimes, there are spurts of growth, like with a child when they get into puberty and growth occurs very rapidly. But most of the time, for those who are watching our children grow up, the growth takes place so gradually, we are barely aware of it. We may be made aware of it by somebody else who has not seen them for a number of years, who say, “Wow, have you grown.”

Well, they have been growing all the while, but we have been with them too, and we are just not aware of it. That is the way it is with you and me spiritually. There is a gradual growth out of the problem. Once in awhile a very rapid disconnection from them, but most of the time, we come out of them the same way that Abraham does: stops and spurts and stops and spurts and then eventually, finally there is a disconnect from them.

I use the illustration in regard to this process, but it almost seems to me that God removes us from our problems in what I call an “unraveling process.” That is about the best explanation that I have been able to come up with in order to understand it. And it seems to me as though He is taking us backward through the bad habits that we have built all these years that we have been in the world, in order to establish new patterns of thought. Now there is wisdom in Him doing it this way.

I think that what occurs as a result of Him doing it this way is that we are not only released from sin, but by taking us backward as we go through the process of what built the habits in the first place, He is able to give us understanding, or to educate us in the understanding of the processes that produce sin, or we might say, produce habits, or we might say, produce character. Because the processes are similar. The only differences are

whether or not we are doing something righteous or whether we are doing something unrighteous. There is going to be habits that are produced or character that is produced.

Now, not only are we released from what sin does, we are also educated to understand the processes that produced the kind of habits, the kind of character that God wants us to have, and in addition to that, it produces other qualities along the way, such as compassion, mercy, kindness, generosity, wisdom. We are gathering understanding and God is taking us through the whole process rather than simply removing us from the problem.

I think that this is one of the major lessons that we are to glean from the Days of Unleavened Bread, from the example of Israel in the wilderness. God got them out of Egypt, but in forty years, Egypt was not gotten out of Israel. Despite a forty-year journey, they still thought the same way at the end of their lives as they did whenever they lived in Egypt.

Now for you and me, even with God's Spirit, we should not expect that bad habits are going to always be quickly and easily overcome. That is the lesson of the Days of Unleavened Bread. Coming out of sin is a long process in which God has to unravel, as it were, the thinking processes that made us what we were before God liberated us from Satan.

Our God is a miracle-working Creator, but if He simply purged us from all bad habits, and put into us the character that He is able to create by fiat, that is, by command, what would result is we would be the same as angels. Now that is awesome. Angels are awesome. But that is not what God is creating. He is purposing to create a mind in a free moral agent who of his own volition *chooses* to do the right thing. That is another thing altogether. Because we free moral agents also have to overcome the pull to follow old, already ingrained habits that produce confusion, separation, destruction, disease, and death.

Apparently, God has concluded the only way that this can be effectively done is to actually take us through the process, what I call unraveling, and then rebuilding in order that this mind that He wants to create in us is engrained in our hearts. Not only as a result of His miracle working power, but also because we have chosen, voluntarily, to go in that direction.

In addition to this, God has also decided that this has to be done by means of faith. We see evidence of God's existence and we also see evidence of the validity of His Word. But we do not *see* Him. We see evidence of Him, but we do not see Him, and that is very difficult for a physically orientated person. Everything that we are familiar with by nature is something that comes to us through the senses. But spiritual things are not dependent upon the senses. Because of this, we can be totally unaware of this by means of our senses. Spiritual things do not necessarily activate the senses. That is something that comes by God's Spirit. The faith of God or the faith of Christ in us and what God is purposing to build in you and me, is created by and through faith. It is something that is spiritual.

And so, we see *evidence* of God's existence in the creation. That we can see, but we cannot see Him. We can see *evidence* of the validity of God's Word, but that is all it is, evidence. Men of very fine minds, scientists, saw that the validity of God Word cannot be proved because it cannot be weighed or measured and is not to subject to experimentation and does not fit within the parameters they use to prove it. And yet this mind that God is creating in us has to be built through spirit, through faith. So even the evidence of the validity of God's Word is somewhat vague.

That brings us to the purpose of the first half of chapter 18 and that is to the establishment Sarah's faith. We have been dealing with Abraham but now we are going to deal with Sarah. When I say establishment, I am not speaking in terms of beginning it but confirming it. That is, confirming that belief in the promise really was there.

Genesis 18:1-15 Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will bring a morsel of

bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.” They said, “Do as you have said.”

So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes.” And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate. Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” So he said, “Here, in the tent.” And He said, “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.” (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.)

Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” And the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?’ Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.” But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. And He said, “No, but you did laugh!”

At the beginning of the chapter, it appears that Abraham is sitting there engrossed in something, thinking, mediating, maybe he was working on something that maybe was small enough to be on his lap or at least in the general area, and then he suddenly became aware of these men that were approaching him.

Now the Hebrew does not indicate as though he saw them a long way off, it indicates that they just suddenly appeared. Like one second, there was nobody there and then the next time he looked up a few seconds later, there were three men. It also appears that he recognized them as being otherworldly instantly. It does not indicate that he was wondering who these people were. He recognized the one immediately as the Lord, which is certainly understandable because remember, they were friends. He had had

other contacts with this same Spirit Being so he must have quickly reasoned that this was the Lord, and the other two there must have been angels.

I want you to notice something that I will not expand on at this point to much, but Abraham acted very quickly. Notice in verse 2, he saw them and he ran from the tent door. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. Here, Abraham recognized these Beings and he zealously sent for food, being hospitable towards them. Then in verse 6, Abraham hurried to the tent, and told Sarah to quickly make ready. Then in verse 7, Abraham ran to the herd and he hastened to prepare.

Then it appears that when everything was ready, and you can imagine, it must have taken a while to prepare this. Everybody was just standing around patiently waiting for Sarah to prepare what must have been unleavened bread because she surely did not wait for the bread to rise, then punch the thing, and let it rise again while her *very* distinguished Guest, the most distinguished Guest that had ever come to her place, was just standing around twiddling their thumbs. So it surely must have been unleavened bread that she baked for them. Then besides that, a calf had to be killed, it had to be skinned, it had to be cut, and had to be roasted.

Now that must have taken a while. I seem to get the indication that people were less hurried in those days. It does not seem that God, standing in their midst, was all that concerned that He was so busy He could not wait for Sarah to bake the bread and so busy He could not wait for a calf to be killed and roasted. That just boggles my mind. If I am busy, I am so antsy that when somebody distracts me from what I am doing, I actually begin to feel a pressure in my chest, and I just have to get this thing done.

Now here is the God of all the universe, the Creator who is standing there, and surely He had more important things to do than that. But He had enough time to patiently wait. God standing around for bread to be baked and for a calf to be roasted. I hope that I will never think again that I am too busy to wait a little while. That is an awesome example! There is nobody in the whole universe who is busier than God. But He had enough time to stand around and patiently wait.

Abraham did not want to keep Him waiting any longer than he had to but still you can only bake bread and kill and roast a calf so fast without causing severe damage.

Now in addition to this I want you to notice this was a big meal. Do you know how much three measures of fine meal is? Three measures is equivalent to one thousand one hundred and twenty-two cubic inches of American dry meal. That is equal to one-half bushel of dry measure A bushel is two thousand one hundred and fifty cubic inches. Now they were only feeding three people and if you count Abraham and Sarah a total of five people. In addition to that there was a whole calf. Even if it was only one year old, that is a lot of weight, that is a lot of meat. And in addition to that, there was butter and milk.

At the very least, it showed Abraham's spirit of generosity. He certainly did not spare the horses, as we might say. He put out a very fine table there.

The next thing I want you to notice, the indications are in verses 9 and 10.

Genesis 18:9-10 Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" So he said, "Here, in the tent." And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.)

We are going to find out that He did not have to ask that question at all, but He did. It is an indication where He is dealing with this situation almost as if He was a man, and she had not come into view. So, we have to assume at this point then, that she is behind Him. That He was sitting in a position where she had not come into view, she was busy roasting a calf or baking bread and that she was somewhere out of sight. Then He asked the question, "Where is your wife Sarah?" Abraham's response was "She is in the tent." She was close enough that she could hear what was going on, because she heard the Lord make the promise that according to the time of life, meaning somewhere around 9 months, she was going to have a child.

Now, she laughed, not out loud, but she laughed *within* herself. She was in the tent, concealed, and she did not make any sound at all. It was something that was completely inward. Now this is how I know: the Lord really did not have to ask that question because He knew where she was and He knew she could hear, but, Sarah was the one who needed the witness as to whom this was that Abraham was dealing with. Just in case she did not know that he was dealing with the omnipotent God, He said, “Why did she laugh?”

Remember, the purpose of this was to establish Sarah’s faith. To confirm that it was there because she was involved in this thing with Abraham. So it was not just Abraham and his faith, because he was just one of the vessels. He was one with Sarah, and Sarah was the one that was going to complete it. So she needed the lesson of the One who was giving this promise.

She must have been startled when He reproved her regarding her laugh. Now Abraham also laughed, but because he was not reproved, I think that God was showing us that there were different attitudes involved in the laughter that these two did. I think that we have to assume that Abraham’s laugh was one of joyous astonishment, that he was going to receive this blessing. It did not have any negativism attached to it. I think that because she was reproved, we would then have to assume that her laugh was one of doubt and unbelief at this point.

Let us go to the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 11:11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.

This is not a contradiction to Genesis 18. What it does show is that indeed, Sarah had at least what must have been a passing doubt of faith, at least for the moment anyway. She must have looked at things physically, carnally, because it does say, “Shall I have pleasure?” meaning the pleasure of giving birth of a child, “After I have grown old, . . . my lord also being old also?” She looked at things carnally and physically. Immediately thoughts go through her mind of, no, that is impossible, as she snickered to herself.

But what Hebrews 11 shows is that Jesus Christ's rebuke had a good positive effect in Sarah's turnabout. Because "by faith she received," her faith was indeed confirmed, although there was a period of stumbling for just a few minutes.

Incidentally, she is the first woman mentioned in Hebrews 11, the faith chapter, and that is significant in itself. But it is also significant because she is the first skeptic mentioned as well. But she repented and that was certainly complimentary of her. So her doubt was not deeply embedded and was overcome. Back to Genesis 18.

Part of God's purpose for visiting Abraham and Sarah has a positive effect, and now we move on to something else.

Genesis 18:16-33 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. And the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

And the Lord said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know." Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord.

And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

So the Lord said, “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.” Then Abraham answered and said, “Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?” So He said, “If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy it.” And he spoke to Him yet again and said, “Suppose there should be forty found there?” So He said, “I will not do it for the sake of forty.”

Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?” So He said, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.” And he said, “Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?” So He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty.” Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of ten.” So the Lord went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

When we consider the beginning of this section, we find that they walked a considerable distance, from the oaks of Mamre which is somewhere near Hebron. It says that the Lord looked toward Sodom, but from our indications, even though He looked there, there is no indication that anybody could have seen Sodom from Hebron. And yet, they went to a place where they could look down toward Sodom and Gomorrah in the plain.

I bring this up because it is customary for those of us who are hospitable that whenever someone is visiting our home, we generally walk the people to the door. Sometimes we will open the door and walk out with them and maybe we will go all the way to the curb with them and to their automobile. It is just something that one does who is hospitable.

Now I think this is another example of Abraham’s generous hospitality when he not only walked Christ to the door of the tent, but he apparently walked with Him for about ten miles till they could finally get to a place where

Abraham, the man, could then see through a cleft in the mountains down to the plains where Sodom and Gomorrah would be in view. So he was generous to a fault, even to the point of walking ten miles with his guest after feeding them a very fine meal.

It might be good to note as to why the Lord told Abraham what He was going to do. I think that there are two reasons. One of them is right here and we will get to that in a second. The other one I think has another basis to it and it is in John 15.

John 15:13-15 “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

Remember, Abraham was the friend of God. What the Lord did was done in the spirit of friendship. Friends disclose their minds, their innermost being with one another. There is a sharing of things because there is a loyalty that is extended between friends that probably does not exist in other kinds of relationships. A person can expose their strengths and weaknesses to a friend and a friend will accept the other person in spite of the weaknesses. And a friend will reprove in a right attitude the weaknesses of his friend. Because there is that relationship that is special and a special kind of loyalty between friends. We will see something about this when we get to Lot. There is a contrast there.

What Christ did was, I think, first of all done on the basis of their friendship. He was about to do something that was going to affect some of Abraham’s loved ones in a very serious way.

The second reason for this, I think, is equally important. The one that is mentioned right in the context and the basis for this revelation begins in verse 18.

Genesis 18:18 “[S]ince Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?”

Abraham was going to grow into something very great—a great nation. Now in order to do this of course Abraham had to have a son, and those sons had to have children. In other words, there had to be a family if there was going to be a nation. There had to be a family grown great if there was going to be a nation. So how could a family grow great and carry out God’s will if that family does not follow in the footsteps of their father, Abraham?

Then He qualifies the basis for this revelation.

Genesis 18:19 “For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”

God was going to work out His purpose through Abraham and his seed, that is, Abraham and his descendants. Now that purpose could not be worked out unless Abraham’s children were like Abraham. So God called Abraham in order that He teach his children. Now the King James Version says, “for I have known him that he may command his children.” That is not wrong. However, it is archaic enough of an expression that it gives someone using today’s English language a different impression. “He called Abraham in order that.” It makes it more [unclear]. In order that there would be more progeny, seed, descendants that would be like Abraham, following in his path.

So why would He tell him about Sodom? It is a veiled admonition; it is a warning. “Abraham, you better do what I called you for.” And it was a warning to the children of Abraham that “you better do what I called you for or else you are going to end up like Sodom and Gomorrah.” Now that is serious, because Sodom and Gomorrah were going to be a permanent memorial to the children of Abraham of what happens to the ungodly. That is the lesson.

Yes, Abraham I am going to bless you with a child, but I have called you in order that you might teach him, and that he might teach his children, and that they might teach their children, so that they can become a great nation. If they do not do that they might end up like Sodom and Gomorrah and they will not become a great nation. That is the basis of the warning. It has its basis in friendship, but it has a very strong admonition.

Genesis 18:20 And the Lord said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, . . .

Let us go back and look at a similar statement in chapter 4.

Genesis 4:10 And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.”

It is simply the Bible’s way of expressing, of nature symbolically crying out, appealing for vengeance. When I say nature here I do not necessarily mean the ground itself, or the trees, or whatever, man is included in nature. In what man does other creatures is included within that. In this case the other creatures are fellow human beings. He is showing nature, as it were, crying out, appealing to God for vengeance to right the wrong that was being done in it, or you might say, done against it.

So, it says that He is going down to check it out. Now the omniscient God does not have to do that. See, He is speaking in the manner of a man so that we will completely understand that if a man was doing that, if a man was a judge, that is what he would have to do. He would have to go on the site and look at it in order to make sure that this witness from nature he was getting was correct. Then he would understand whether this judgment he was about to hand out was going to be correct. So He is speaking here as a man is speaking.

Now, Abraham then begins his appeal. Once again, he sets for you and me a very fine example. I think that you have to agree with me that his appeal was bold, to say the least. You can do that with friends. In a way, that is very heartening.

If we are God's friends, we can understand the kind of reception we have with Him. Are we not commanded to come boldly before the throne of grace? Are we not commanded to be persistent with our appeals? I do not believe that Abraham shows that he was a [unclear]. What did he doing? He was dealing with God almost like he would do when dealing in commerce. Almost like he was haggling. I tell you, that is a real friendship. He must have known the mind and nature of that God. He knew that surely he was not going to be struck into cinders and left smoldering in the dust. I think he knew God pretty well.

Now think brethren, how many times have we done things of which we are exceedingly broken up about, guilty, feeling condemned, feeling like we are a worm? Yet God has never turned one of us into a cinder either. Does that not tell you something about Him? Does that not tell you that His desire is not to destroy, that His desire is to save? That His desire is earnestly to see you in His Kingdom? That He is going to give us every benefit of the doubt, every opportunity? I tell you, He could have zapped Sarah for snickering within herself! She was not only doubting, she was hiding her doubt in hypocrisy.

God really desires a relationship with us. Because He not only initiates it, He is not easily turned aside by the sometimes willful sin that we commit.

Abraham by this time was beginning to know God pretty well. He was unafraid to deal with Him in that way.

I think we also have to appreciate something else here in Abraham. A few chapters back he [unclear] as Sodom and Gomorrah's protector and defender and he avenged the wrong that was done against them and he delivered them with his 318 man army from the Assyrians that took them into slavery. So here again in chapter 18 we find him once again putting himself between, as it were, them and the enemy. And this time he is acting as their mediator before God and interceding on their behalf knowing full well what that place was like down there.

I want you to note that his basis of appeal before God was not for Lot. Lot is not even once mentioned. Although Lot may have well been on Abraham's

mind, the appeal was made for the entire area. So, he establishes his appeal on “Hey, maybe there are fifty righteous there.” But I want you to also notice there that the appeal was made because he knew the mind of God.

Genesis 18:25 “Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

That was the basis of his appeal. He knew the mind of God. He already knew the answer, he knew God would not. So with that [unclear] mind, he thought he could bargain with God eventually made a deal with him, that if there were even ten righteous, He would spare the whole area, the wicked as well.

I think that we would have to admit that there is an admirable, child-like [unclear] in Abraham. It seems as if he just blurted it out, almost the way a kid would do it. He persevered until he made his point. We also have to understand that God respected his request because it was well within the will of God as well. That establishes something for us that we already know. That God will allow us to talk with Him very boldly. He even grants a seemingly bold request.

That brings us to chapter 19 and we find something very interesting.

Genesis 19:1-11 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. And he said, “Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.”

And they said, “No, but we will spend the night in the open square.” But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house.

And they called to Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally.” So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, and said, “Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof.”

And they said, “Stand back!” Then they said, “This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them.” So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door.

We can begin to make some interesting comparisons between Lot and Abraham. Before we begin this, let us go back to II Peter 2.

II Peter 2:7-8 and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)

In verse 6 Sodom and Gomorrah is mentioned as God’s punishment. It is interesting to note that Lot was called a righteous man. It does not appear from Genesis that his righteousness, if we could qualify it in this way, was on the same level with Abraham. The Bible consistently shows Lot making questionable choices. They may of and by themselves not have been outright sins, but they do seem to have been downright foolish.

One translation of II Peter 2, a section calls him a good man, another one calls him upright. The term here that is translated vexed, or he was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked. And then in verse 8, “tormented his righteous soul.” It means troubled, to oppress, it could even mean curses.

I think we can say in regard to his righteousness is that he had at least not joined in the sin of sodomy, the most vile of sins, but apparently he had joined in a great deal of their way of life. And indeed, it is quite possible that he spent a great deal of time preaching about their sin.

You might remember back there in verse 9, it mentioned that the men of Sodom said, “this one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge.” They were talking about Lot standing in judgment of them. This indicates to me that he was probably preaching, or if he was not preaching, they at least knew very well that he was not practicing the kind of lifestyle that they were practicing.

Now it was quite customary for those of us who live in an almost totally secularized society not to even be shocked anymore by the things we see and hear going on around us. You might watch a television program or a movie depicting the most vile thing, making sin appear to be good and acceptable as a part of our way of life. It does not even shock us, it does not even stir any anger, it does not make us cover our eyes or make us walk out of the movie. We may even agree to it to some degree.

At least you have to say for what the Bible says about Lot that he was troubled, vexed, tormented, tortured by what was going on around him, even though he chose unwisely, foolishly to live within it. So Lot appears to have had a measure of faith, but his approach to living was quite a bit different from Abraham's.

Genesis 13:10-13 And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom. But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord.

So Lot left Egypt, but apparently Egypt never left Lot. It shows he was an upright man, a good man. He was a great deal like the Israelites who came

out of Egypt. The fact that he chose to go in that direction toward Sodom and Gomorrah rather than resolving the problem that arose between his herdsmen and the herdsmen of Abraham, and instead choosing the ground that was like Egypt, or rather than return to Abraham and allowing him to make the choice, shows us a very great deal about Lot and his approach to life.

Does it not appear to you that he was a man of some faith, and at least intellectually, he wanted to follow the ways of God, but he wanted to do it with one foot in the world. He was not like Abraham. He consciously chose to separate himself from within the context of what was being worked out at that time.

Things today are a little bit different than they were in Abraham's day, that is, what God is working out. God is teaching us something here. The man of true faith separates himself as far as he can possibly get from the world. The person whose faith is weak, though he does have some faith, gets as close to the edge of the cliff as he possibly can get, but still tries to somehow keep God [unclear]. Now Lot seems to have compensated and in some way justified what he was doing in Sodom by preaching to these people and scolding them for their sins. But he never entirely broke away from that way of life himself.

Let us turn again to the book of Exodus. Israel has just come out of Egypt and they are standing on the shores of the Red Sea.

Exodus 14:11-12 Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."

Exodus 16:2-3 Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Now this is a problem that God confronted many, many times. It is recorded because we will likely have the same problem. It is very comfortable to go back to former ways of thinking. This is getting back to the unraveling we talked about again. Israel never left it, and apparently Lot never left it either. But we have to understand that that process of coming out is something that has to be done *completely*. We cannot do what Lot did and somehow make our faith in God work.

Luke 5:36-39 Then He spoke a parable to them: “No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, ‘The old is better.’ ”

What this is saying by these simple little phrases is that what Lot did and what Israel did will not work. There has to be a total commitment to God’s way. It describes the blend of the two together and we are going to find that neither one of them will work. We are going to see that in spades with Lot because he is a very clear example regarding this.

I think that I had mentioned to you before that I am convinced that Israel’s form of idolatry is rarely one in which they outright, totally, and completely, bowed down and worshipped Baal, Molech, or any of those other gods of the land. But rather what they did, in most cases, even though there were some who undoubtedly did it wholeheartedly, most of the people tried to blend the two or three ways of life and make them all work. The problem that arises is the principle of “No man can serve two masters.” They will serve the one and reject the other. It just cannot be done. You cannot blend God’s way and the world’s way together. That is called by the world, syncretism, a blending together, a meshing together. It will not work in God’s way. That is why Christ gave this instruction to those who are going to be His disciples:

Luke 14:26 “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”

Family relationship are usually the strongest ones that people have. Christ is warning that even family relationships have to be set aside in favor of Christ. If there is a disagreement between our ties and loyalties within our families on what to do and what God says to do, He wants to know that if we have to choose, we follow Him. You cannot be His disciple under that kind of circumstance. You can recall the rich young ruler who came to Christ. Christ told him to go sell all that he had, and the young man went away sorrowful because he had great possessions. He could not tear himself away from something that came between him and God.

Back to the thought of chapter 19.

What we are talking about here is what separates the Abrahams and the Davids and many others of like minds from the Lots among us. It is not that they did not sin, but rather, they were wholehearted in their dedication to God. You know that verse in Genesis 17:1 where Christ told him “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless [perfect in the King James].” The word blameless can be translated as wholehearted or single hearted, or single minded. Abraham’s responsibility was to be wholehearted. You see that he did that in his hospitality toward Jesus Christ, and he went after with a great zeal. God said about David that “he was a man after My own heart.” What God meant was that David was wholehearted in what he did in relation to God. He did not hold back, at least he did not *knowingly* hold back. But he gave himself completely and totally to God. This is also why it says in James 1:

James 1:6-8 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

We are beginning to see what Lot's problem was. We know he was, to some degree, a man of faith, and we know he could be called upright. He could even be called righteous. And though he was tormented and vexed by the things that was going on all around him, and he was not joining in on what they were doing, yet he was not wholehearted in his pursuit after God. He wanted to somehow, rather than being kicked out of the world, he wanted to syncretize God's way of life and still have the blessings of the wicked city living that was available to him there in the plains.

What we are going to see next time is a very large contrast between Abraham and Lot. One was a very wholehearted man and the other, not so much, even though he was a person that had a measure of faith, enough to be called upright. It is quite a lesson in what this kind of life will produce.