

11. The choice that changes the future

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We have many choices to make each and every day in our lives. It starts from what to eat or what to wear in the morning. For the ladies, this can be really serious choices. I've seen my daughter go through just about the entire closet before she walked out the door. For guys, the same shirt we wore yesterday is fine with us.

However, there are choices that change our future. They are very important choices we have to make: jobs, locations we live, whom we marry, and the most important choice of all, where we will spend our eternity. The Bible is filled with people who made good choices and bad choices:

- Moses chose to stay with the Israelites instead of luxury of carnal Egypt.
 - Joseph chose to honor God by staying pure instead of falling into the temptation of Mrs. Potiphar.
 - Daniel chose to worship God continuously in spite of the threats from his enemies.
- These are the good choices.

But there are also many bad choices:

- Samson chose to dwell in arms of Delilah and ended up losing his eyesight and anointing of the Holy Spirit.
- King Saul chose to depend on his own strength instead of God and lost his kingdom.
- Judas chose to take thirty shekels of silver instead of eternal life in Christ.

Choices are constantly before us. The choices we make change our future. When God created us, He created us as a spiritual and physical beings with capability of free will. We can make good choices that would affect our eternal lives or bad choices that would haunt us for the rest of our lives or making no choice which is a choice in itself.

A. RETURNING TO FAITH

Genesis 13:1-4 Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. 2 Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. 3 And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

Christians who get entangled in the world cannot be happy with themselves. They must go back to the very place where they abandoned the Lord. This is repentance and confession, to turn away from sin and to make amends. Abram could not have confessed his sin and remained in Egypt. No, he had to get back to the place of the tent and the altar, back to the place where he could call upon the Lord and receive blessing. This is a good principle for Christians to follow.

From this trip to Egypt, Abram did not gain anything good, but lost two valuable things and added two unnecessary carnal things:

1) Lost time

The weeks that Abram and his household were away from the Lord were lost and could not be regained.

2) Lost testimony

Could Abram ever witness to Pharaoh about the true God, after deceiving him? Absolutely not! How sad it will be when we face God at the judgment seat of Christ and discover how many souls have gone to hell because of the poor testimony of carnal Christians, or even ours!

3) Hagar's place in the family

Sarah's maid, Hagar, came from Egypt, and brought untold trouble to the family. Of course, the suggestion that she bear a child came from Sarah, but the presence of Hagar helped to bring about the carnal scheme. Whatever we bring with us from the godless world into our Christian life will ultimately cause us trouble.

4) Lot's enjoyment of Egypt

Lot developed a taste for Egypt. Even though Abram took Lot out of Egypt, he could not take Egypt out of Lot. It is always tragic when a mature believer leads a younger Christian astray.

B. THE STRIFE BETWEEN ABRAM AND LOT'S HERDSMEN

Genesis 13:5-7 Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. 6 Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. 7 And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.

Lot was walking in the flesh, and Abram was walking in the Spirit. This always leads to conflict. The outward cause was increased wealth. But the real cause was Lot's unbelief and carnality.

Jesus Christ is a divider. His presence brings conflict between people of the same family. The conflict with Lot must have been a burden to Abram and Sarah at the same time as a poor testimony to the heathen who are living in the land.

Matt 10:34 Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

When Christians are suing each others or having church splits do not bring glory to God, but they give juicy gossips and the seeds of mockeries to non-believers. However, I am not talking about exposing those who are teaching false doctrines with the rank of Christianity.

C. THE GENEROUS OFFER THAT COMES FROM FAITH IN GOD

Genesis 13:8-9 So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left."

Abram enjoyed the friendship with God, but Lot would rather have friendship with the world.

Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

2 Cor 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

James 4 warns us that the friendship with the world is enmity against God. This is the case in point with Lot. Because his carnal desire for the world, Lot was dragging Abram down.

This is the reason why time to time we should check out our friendship and relationship with those who are around us. I am not saying that we should live in an island where there is no non-believers around. Then who are going to spread the Good News of Jesus to them? We can be in the world, but we don't have to be of the world. When you are around with particular people, ask yourself: Does your spirit get lifted up and exalt the name of the Lord or does your carnal desire spring up its ugly head?

When I was working for a Yellow Page Directory company as a graphic designer, I knew several people who claimed themselves to be Christians, but their actions and language they use anything but Christian should be. They might claim Jesus as their Savior, but certainly they don't have Him as the Lord. I am sure that you can think of a few of your family members, relatives and friends right now. Or maybe you are one of those who have a form of godliness, but denying its power as the Word says.

Abram as a godly man tried to settle the problem by yielding himself and giving the first choice to Lot to take the land he wants.

Abram knew whatever Lot chose God would make sure Abram came out all right. Because he trusted in God, Abram did not have to be obsessed with his own "rights" and neither do we. The only right we truly have is the right to go to hell. Everything else is the free gift of God and has nothing to do with our "rights."

D. THE BEGINNING OF LOT'S BAD CHOICES

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. 11 Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. 12 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. 13 But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord.

Lot cast his longing eyes toward the plain of Jordan near by Dead Sea. He cares only for the material abundance of the land, and cares nothing for how it will impact him and his family spiritually. While Abram was walking by faith, Lot was walking only by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Abram made a right choice, but Lot made a wrong one. One step led to another, Lot continuously headed to wrong direction. When we get into sin, we didn't get there overnight. Our sins have being added up to the point for that big disaster. In other words, we are setting ourselves up for fall.

Please notice Lot's point of reference for the plain of Jordan. It reminded him the land of Egypt he saw. As I mentioned before, whenever you see "Egypt" in the Bible, it symbolizes the carnal world where the believers of Jesus Christ has no business in longing for. What is your point of reference?

This reminds me what happened to Eve in the Garden of Eden in chapter 3:6.

Genesis 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

However, there is another person who was tempted beyond anyone could handle. Yes, it was Jesus in the wilderness before His earthly ministry started. Jesus was tempted by Satan himself. Satan enticed Jesus to fulfill the lust of flesh, the lust of eyes and the pride of life. While Eve was misquoting what the Lord said to them, Jesus quote the Word correctly and used them against the temptations effectively.

1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Lot moved himself and his family closer to Sodom which was located on the south side of Dead Sea. Not only Lot looked at the area, but also he actively moved toward the place of the wickedness and sin. He is going to put his family into jeopardy. We will talk more about it in chapter 19.

The separation from Lot was a great thing for Abram, but not for Lot. If you are really walking with God, you want to hang around with godly people. If you'd rather hang around your brewski drinking buddies, you have to wonder where your heart is.

One of the frequent excuses I hear from those are living together without getting married is that they cannot afford to live separately. If that is the case, come see me. The church will pay for your rent for a couple month, if you move out and have no sex until you get married. Do you know what the answer I get for that offer? Either they don't come back to the church anymore or they continue to live together even though they know it is wrong in the sight of God. It is not about the finance. They wanted to live together as they want, not what God want. You cannot afford not to please God. If you please God with your action, God will bless you more than you can possibly imagine.

If you are a carnal Christian, the last thing you want to hear is this kind of sermons. Because it is too convicting. So, what are you going to do about it? Are you going to make a change according to God's way or are you going to continue your own carnal way that leads to destruction?

E. GOD'S REMINDER OF HIS PROMISE

Genesis 13:14-18 And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are--northward, southward, eastward, and westward; 15 for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. 16 And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. 17 Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you." 18 Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord.

While Lot was getting farther from the Lord, Abram was drawing closer. While Lot was becoming a friend of the world, Abram was becoming the friend of God. While Lot took a part of the land, Abram was given all of the land.

The people of the world claim what their eyes can see, while the people of God claim what God's eyes can see! Remember what I said before, God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him.

The name 'Mamre' means, "vision". 'Hebron' means "communion". Abram is once again walking in the Lord's vision for him and in communion with the Lord.

Abram built another altar. He lived life in constant awareness of the need for a sacrificial atonement and covering.

We talked about the choice we make will change our future. It did for Lot. He made a bad, as a matter of fact, a horrible choice to ruin his life and his family's lives in their future.

You all have a choice to make this morning. You can choose to come closer to God or you can choose to walk out the door and go about your business without Jesus in your heart. God never forces your hand to make a choice to Him. He patiently waits for your choice and He will honor yours even if it is bad. You cannot blame God if you choose to go without Him.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) Whatever we bring with us from the godless world into our Christian life will ultimately cause us trouble.

2) When we make choices, we must make them with God in mind.

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

3) We must remember that even small and seemingly unhelpful choices at the beginning can bring a devastating result to us.

4) We must remember that our carnal desire wants to satisfy the lust of eyes, the lust of flesh and the pride of life.

James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.