

## **DON'T NEGLECT GOD IN YOUR DECISION-MAKING**

**13** <sup>8</sup>Then Abram said to Lot, I beg you, let there be no conflict between me and you, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. <sup>9</sup>Is not the whole land before you? I ask you, please separate yourself from me. If you will go to the left, then I will go to the right. Or if you will go to the right, I will go to the left. <sup>10</sup>Lot looked up and observed that all the Plain of the Jordan was well watered everywhere, it was like the garden of Jehovah, or like the land of Egypt as you go towards Zoar. (This was before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) <sup>11</sup>So Lot chose for himself all the Plain of the Jordan. Then Lot journeyed east. So they separated themselves from one another. <sup>12</sup>Abram settled in the land of Canaan, but Lot settled in the cities of the Plain and moved his tent as far as Sodom. (Gen. 13:8-12)

**18** And Jehovah appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup>Abraham looked up, and behold, three men stood before him. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of his tent to greet them. He bowed down to the earth <sup>3</sup>and said, My Lord, if I have now found favor in your sight, I beg you, do not pass by your servant. <sup>4</sup>Let a little water be brought, then you may all wash your feet and take a rest under this tree. <sup>5</sup>Since you have come to your servant, allow me to bring you a crust of bread, so that you may eat and regain your strength; then you shall go on your way. And they said, Do as you have spoken. <sup>6</sup>So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, Quickly prepare three measures of fine flour, knead it, and bake some bread. <sup>7</sup>Then Abraham ran to the herd, selected a tender and choice calf, and gave it to his servant who hurried to prepare it. <sup>8</sup>Abraham took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them. He stood near them under the tree while they ate. ...

<sup>16</sup>When the men got up to leave, they looked toward Sodom. Abraham went with them to bring them on their way. <sup>17</sup>And Jehovah said, Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do; <sup>18</sup>seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed by him? <sup>19</sup>The reason I have known Abraham\* is so that he may instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of Jehovah—to do righteousness and justice; so that Jehovah may bestow upon Abraham that which he has promised concerning him. <sup>20</sup>And Jehovah said, Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and because their sin is very grievous; <sup>21</sup>I will now go down and investigate whether they have done all that the protest which has been brought before me charges; and if not, I will know. <sup>22</sup>Then the men departed from there and went toward Sodom; but Abraham remained standing before Jehovah.

...

**19** The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening. Now Lot was sitting at the entrance gate of the city. When Lot saw them, he stood up to greet them; bowing himself with his face to the ground. <sup>2</sup>He said to them, Hear me now, my lords, I beg you, come to your servant's house. Spend the night with me; wash your feet. Then you shall rise early in the morning and go on your way. And they said, No; on the contrary, we will remain all night in the street. <sup>3</sup>But he strongly urged them; so they went with him and entered his house. Lot made a feast for them. He baked unleavened bread, and they ate. ...

*<sup>12</sup>Then the men said to Lot, Do you have any family members living here beside yourself? Whomever you have living in the city—your sons-in-law, your sons, and your daughters—take them out of here; <sup>13</sup>for we are about to destroy this place. The outcry to Jehovah against this people is so great that he has sent us to destroy this city. <sup>14</sup>So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law who were married to his daughters. He said to them, Get up and get out of this place, because Jehovah is about to destroy the city. But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be a man who was joking.*

*<sup>15</sup>As soon as it was morning, the angels hurried Lot out, saying, Get up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, so that you will not be consumed with the iniquity of the city. <sup>16</sup>But Lot lingered; so the men took hold of his hand, and the hand of his wife, and the hand of his two daughters—Jehovah being merciful to him—and dragged him away, setting him outside the city. <sup>17</sup>Then, after they had brought them away from the city, he said, Flee for your life; do not look behind you, neither stay in any part of the Plain. Flee to the mountains, so that you will not be consumed. ...*

*<sup>24</sup>Then Jehovah rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire—from Jehovah out of heaven. <sup>25</sup>So he overthrew those cities—and all the Plain—and all the inhabitants of those cities, and all the vegetation of the land.*

*<sup>26</sup>But Lot's wife, who was following him, looked back and she was turned into a pillar of salt.*

*<sup>27</sup>When Abraham got up early in the morning and came to the place where he had stood before Jehovah; <sup>28</sup>he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the Plain. As he watched, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace. <sup>29</sup>So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain, God remembered Abraham, by delivering Lot from the catastrophe when he overthrew the cities in which Lot lived. (Gen. 18:1-19:29)*

\*That is to say, “The reason I have entered into covenant with Abraham.”

## **Introduction**

Roy Chappell spent his boyhood near Nashville, Tennessee, during the Great Depression of the 1930's. Roy's mother had always taken him to church, but it was during his high school years that God touched Roy's heart through an evangelist's message. Roy's commitment to Christ and growth as a young Christian so impressed the pastor and leaders of his church that they offered Roy a full scholarship to college and seminary. Roy was excited about the prospect of serving the LORD as a minister of the gospel.

But the war in Korea was escalating, and Roy knew that he might be drafted into the army at any time. So he decided to join the navy and put his education on hold while fulfilling his military obligation. During his time in the navy Roy began to drink, and the problem began to grow.

During his navy days Roy also got married. Following his discharge, he and his wife settled in California, where he worked his way into a good job. (Roy had forgotten about his education and his desire to serve Christ as a minister of the gospel.)

Working for a major oil company, Roy was wine and dine; in the process he was becoming an alcoholic. Within a few years he lost his job and his family.

Roy knew that God was still in his life, but he had no time for the LORD. It was the devil who was directing him on a path to complete ruin, and Roy almost arrived at the final destination. When he finally hit bottom, Roy was living in an abandoned truck in a Wilmington, California, junkyard. When he finally realized his need for help, he went to the Salvation Army's Harbor Light treatment center in Los Angeles.

At Harbor Light he was confronted by people who loved him and were honest with him about his condition and his destiny if he did not make the necessary changes. Major Robert Reddington of the Harbor Light Center looked him in the eye and told him, "Christ is the only solution to your drinking problem." Roy wrestled with the issue back in his room; finally, at 3 a.m. he prayed a simple prayer: Jesus, can you forgive me? After his prayer, Roy felt a warm glow come over his heart and Jesus seemed to say to him: "I do not want you to die a sinner on Skid Row. I want you to work for Me." From that moment on, Roy Chappell went to work for God. (*Power*, 10/28/90, pp.2-ff.)

There is a parallel between the life of Roy Chappell and that of Lot. They were both children of God. For a time in their lives they both wound up far from God. They each got themselves into spiritual peril and suffered loss because they neglected God in their decision-making.

Because the consequences of such decisions can be tragic, let us resist the temptation to neglect God in our decision-making.

### **I. Don't Neglect God in Your Decision-Making; Because Your Fellowship with Him will Suffer**

The LORD and His angels appear to Abraham and meet with him as he sits by the oaks of Mamre (18:1.) In contrast to this meeting, it is only the two angels who come to Lot as he sits at the gate of Sodom (19:1.)

The LORD shares His plans with Abraham; He makes known His intention of judging Sodom (18:16-21.) He does so in order that Abraham might know that the catastrophe that is about to come upon Sodom is a divine and righteous judgment, not a capricious act without just cause. Furthermore, He does so in order that Abraham and his descendants may learn to reverence the righteousness of God so that they may depart from evil and enjoy the fulfillment of His promised blessing. The LORD's ministry to Abraham on this occasion is an example of the divine work described in Proverbs 2:6-8,

*... Jehovah gives wisdom. Out of his mouth comes knowledge and understanding. <sup>7</sup>He stores up sound wisdom for the upright so that it might be a*

*shield for those who walk in integrity; <sup>8</sup>so that he may guard the paths of justice and protect the way of his saints.* (Prov.2:6-8)

Note that “*sound wisdom*” is “*stored up,*” or “*reserved,*” for the upright, it is not indiscriminately made known to everyone. This “*sound wisdom*”—this understanding of the law of God and its application to the circumstances of life—serves as a shield for the godly, enabling and causing them to walk in the way of the LORD so that they may receive His blessing.

Abraham learns these things at a safe distance, while Lot must learn these things through hard and painful experience. The angels merely inform Lot of the impending judgment about to fall upon Sodom and urge him to escape (19:12-13.) In His covenant mercy and faithfulness, the LORD’s angels forcibly drag Lot out of the city (vs. 15-16.) Whereas Abraham was spared from the calamities of Sodom, Lot was rescued only at the last moment after having endured much grief, as the Apostle Peter notes,

*... God rescued righteous Lot who was distressed by the conduct of lawless men living in licentiousness—<sup>9</sup>for by what he saw and heard as he lived among them day by day, that righteous man felt his righteous soul tormented by their lawless deeds.* (2 Pet. 2:7-8)

Abraham, living in fellowship with the LORD, has an effective prayer life (18:22-32.) Abraham’s plea is that the LORD will spare the righteous, that He will not indiscriminately allow the righteous to suffer the same fate as the wicked (18:25.) His prayer is effectual on behalf of Lot, because Lot demonstrated himself to be the only righteous man left in Sodom (Gen. 19:7.) Being a true child of God, Lot’s sense of righteousness was never fully extinguished. On the contrary, it appears that the LORD used Lot’s adverse experiences to produce a repentance and revival of righteousness in his life, note Psalm 119:67, “*Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I observe your word.*” At the same time, in no small measure Lot’s last minute deliverance was due to Abraham’s intercession, his effective prayer life (19:29.) Note the testimony of the Apostle James: “*The petition of a righteous man is able to accomplish much*” (Jas. 5:16b.)

Don’t neglect God in your decision-making, or your fellowship with Him will suffer. The Psalmist declares, “*The friendship of Jehovah is with those who fear him; and he will fulfill his covenant with them*” (Psl. 25:14.) In contrast to Lot, Abraham enjoyed intimate fellowship with the LORD, insight into the ways of the LORD, and an effective prayer life.

## **II. Don’t Neglect God in Your Decision-Making; Because You will Make Yourself Liable to Suffer Great Loss**

When the LORD and His angels appear before Abraham, he entertains them with a great feast: cakes made of fine flour, a tender calf, curds and milk (18:6-8.)

When the two angels arrive at Lot's house in Sodom, he also entertains them with a "*feast:*" a "*feast*" that consists of nothing more than unleavened bread (19:3.) Sodom had for 12 years paid large sums of tribute money to the warlord, Chedorlaomer (Gen. 14:4); when the city rebelled against him, it had finally been plundered by his armies (Gen. 14:11.) Contrast this present state of Sodom with the state that first attracted Lot to it:

*Lot looked up and observed that all the Plain of the Jordan was well watered everywhere, it was like the garden of Jehovah, or like the land of Egypt as you go towards Zoar. (This was before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)* (Gen. 13:10)

The LORD promises Abraham that at long last Sarah, his wife, shall bear to him the promised covenant son (18:9-10.) This shall be a supernatural blessing derived from the LORD's omnipotent power (Gen. 18:14) and His covenant faithfulness. Lot, on the other hand, suffers tragic losses in his family. His sons-in-law scoff at his warning, and they, together with Lot's married daughters, perish in the judgment that descends upon Sodom (19:14.) Lot's wife turned back and she perished in the judgment that befell the city (19:26.) Later, Lot's unmarried daughters, destitute and frantic, commit incest and produce two of Israel's greatest enemies: Moab and Ammon (Gen. 19:30-38.)

Abraham witnesses from afar the judgment that fell upon Sodom, standing safely on the heights of the Promised Land (19:27-28)—note Psalm 91:8-10 and Psalm 37:34,37-39,

*Only with your eyes shall you see and observe the reward the wicked receive. <sup>9</sup>You, O Jehovah, are my refuge! You have made the Most High your dwelling place; <sup>10</sup>therefore no calamity shall befall you, neither shall any plague come near to your tent. (Psl. 91:8-10)*

*Wait for Jehovah, and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land. When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. ...<sup>37</sup>Take note of the blameless man, and observe the upright; for there is a blessed end for the man of peace. <sup>38</sup>As for transgressors, all of them shall be destroyed together; the future of the wicked shall be cut off. <sup>39</sup>But the salvation of the righteous is from Jehovah; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble. (Psl. 37:34,37-39)*

Lot, on the other hand, is snatched from the impending judgment at the last moment, being dragged out by the angels of the LORD and commanded to flee for his life.

Don't neglect God in your decision-making, or else you will make yourself liable to suffer great loss.

## **Conclusion**

The lives of Abraham and Lot reach their climax in Genesis 19. These two lives, distinct from one another, can be traced back to Genesis 13 and the respective choices that were made at that time. Abraham made a godly decision: in obedience to the LORD, he remained in the land of Canaan—the Promised Land. Lot neglected to consider the LORD in his decision: thinking only of earthly security and worldly gain, he departed from the Promised Land and thereby violated his covenant responsibility.

May the LORD grant us to learn and heed this great lesson of Scripture: If we neglect God in our decision-making, we will eventually be confronted with the adverse consequences of those decisions. For the welfare of our own spiritual life as well as that of our family, let us not neglect God in our decision-making.