

## **DON'T NEGLECT GOD IN YOUR THINKING**

**19** <sup>30</sup>Lot left Zoar and lived in the mountains with his two daughters; because he was afraid to stay in Zoar. So he lived in a cave, he and his two daughters. <sup>31</sup>Then the older said to the younger, Our father is old, and there is no man on the earth with whom we may have sexual relations according to the practice of all the earth. <sup>32</sup>Come, let us make our father drunk with wine, and we will lie with him, so that we may preserve a family line for our father. <sup>33</sup>So they made their father drunk with wine that night; and the older daughter went in and lay with her father. He was unaware of when she lay down or when she left. <sup>34</sup>The next day the older said to the younger, Last night I lay with my father; again tonight let us make him drunk with wine; and this time you go in and lie with him, so that we may preserve a family line for our father. <sup>35</sup>So that night also they made their father drunk with wine; and the younger went in and lay with him. He was unaware of when she lay down or when she left. <sup>36</sup>Thus both of Lot's daughters were pregnant by their father. <sup>37</sup>The older daughter gave birth to a son and named him Moab; he is the father of the Moabites of today. <sup>38</sup>And the younger daughter also gave birth to a son, and she named him Ben-ammi; he is the father of the Ammonites of today.

**20** Now Abraham moved from there toward the land of the South, and stayed between Kadesh and Shur. Then he moved to Gerar. <sup>2</sup>And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister. Then Abimelech the king of Gerar sent for Sarah and brought her to himself.

<sup>3</sup>But God came to Abimelech at night in a dream and said to him, You are a dead man, because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife. <sup>4</sup>Now Abimelech had not come near her. And he said, Lord, will you destroy a righteous nation? <sup>5</sup>Did he not himself say to me, She is my sister? And she, even she herself said, He is my brother. In the integrity of my heart and the innocency of my hands have I done this. <sup>6</sup>And God said to him in the dream, Indeed, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not allow you to touch her. <sup>7</sup>Now, therefore, restore the man's wife to him. He is a prophet, and he shall pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and your whole household.

<sup>8</sup>Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants. He told them all these things privately; and they were greatly afraid. <sup>9</sup>Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, What have you done to us? In what way have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done things to me that ought not to be done. <sup>10</sup>And Abimelech said to Abraham, What did you see, that you have done this thing? <sup>11</sup>Then Abraham replied, I did this because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; they will kill me because of my wife. <sup>12</sup>Furthermore, she indeed is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. <sup>13</sup>When God caused me to wander from my homeland, I said to her, This is the kindness you shall show me: Everywhere we go, say of me, He is my brother.

<sup>14</sup>Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and menservants and maidservants, and gave them to Abraham, and he restored Sarah his wife to him. <sup>15</sup>And Abimelech said, Look, my land is before you, settle wherever it pleases you. <sup>16</sup>And to Sarah he said, Listen, I

*have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. This money shall pay for the offense against you before your whole household; you are completely vindicated. <sup>17</sup>And Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants. Then once again they were able to bear children; <sup>18</sup>for Jehovah had firmly closed up every womb in Abimelech's household because of Sarah, Abraham's wife. (Gen. 19:30-20:18)*

## **Introduction**

Steve was a very successful businessman in Chattanooga, Tennessee; so successful that he actually thought he was in control of his life. In his words, "It was easy for me to chart my course and see how I was progressing in the company. I had my entire future carefully mapped out with insurance policies, investments and a house for security. My philosophy was that man is at the center of life and has all the answers."

One day Steve's wife commented, "We really ought to thank God for all the blessings he has given us." Steve responded, "You don't thank God! You thank me! I'm the one who brings home the paycheck. I'm the one who pays the bills. I'm the one who plans how we're going to spend the money." Reflecting back on that time Steve admits, "Although it makes me cringe now, at that time I really believed what I was saying." (*Power*, 4/2/89, pp.2-3, 6-7)

Here was a man who neglected God in his thinking: he felt he was completely capable of analyzing problems and proposing solutions without consulting the LORD. We may not do it as blatantly, or as blasphemously, as Steve, but we are all prone to do the same thing. We are not the only ones. Lot's two daughters did the same thing, even Abraham did it; they, too, neglected God in their thinking.

At first glance, Genesis 19:30-38 and Genesis 20:1-18 do not appear to have anything in common, but upon closer inspection they have several things in common: 1) in both passages we are given insight into the thinking of the main characters; 2) in both cases we find that they neglected God in their thinking, and 3) in both cases the fact that the characters neglected God in their thinking produced actions that had detrimental results.

Because of the detrimental effects such thinking inevitably produces, let us guard against the folly of neglecting God in our thinking.

## **I. Don't Neglect God in Your Thinking, For You May Create More Problems Than You Solve**

After Lot and his two daughters escape from Sodom they take refuge in the mountains. They fear to stay in the town of Zoar, so they flee to the mountains and live in a cave. As you listen to the daughters' discussion (vs. 31-32,) you discover that they have become convinced that they and their father are the only people left on the earth. They think that the LORD's judgment upon Sodom and

Gomorrah is on the same universal scale as was the Great Flood. They did not remember God's promise as recorded in Genesis 8:21-22 (printed below,) and they did not seek God's assessment of the situation.

*And Jehovah smelled the sweet aroma and said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again destroy every living creature, as I have done.  
22As long as the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. (Gen. 8:21-22)*

Confronted with what appears to them to be an insurmountable problem, (continuing the human race and the covenant line with no prospect of having a husband,) they resort to their own wisdom. They may have thought themselves abandoned by God—forgetting that He by His angels was the One who delivered them from the judgment that befell Sodom. They have forgotten God's covenant faithfulness; do they think the LORD has also consumed Abraham and abandoned His promise? Note Genesis 18:18-19,

*... Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed by him... 19The reason I have known Abraham [i.e.; The reason I have entered into covenant with 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. (Gen. 18:18-19)*

Neglecting to take account of God and His Word, and neglecting to seek His counsel, the two daughters propose their own solution: incest. They pursue the philosophy that “the end justifies the means.” They believe that it is necessary and even justified to violate God's moral law as outlined in Genesis 2:24 (“*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall be bound to his wife; and they shall be one flesh*”) in order to accomplish the “good” purpose of providing descendants for their father. Perhaps there was also the motive of self-interest and self-preservation: Who will take care of us after our father dies? Who will look after us in our old age if we do not have children? The two daughters carry out their plan, only to produce more problems and greater problems than they could have imagined: the descendants of their two sons (Moab and Ben-Ammi) become the perpetual enemies of God's covenant people Israel.

Don't neglect God in your thinking, or else you may create more problems than you solve. At what times are we especially vulnerable to neglect God in our thinking? We are especially vulnerable at times of spiritual lows, such as the case of Lot's daughters. Then, too, we are also vulnerable to do so after times of spiritual triumphs, such as the case with Joshua and Israel following the fall of Jericho recorded in Joshua 9:3-4a,6,14,

*... when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, <sup>4</sup>they acted cunningly. They departed from their territory pretending to be ambassadors ... <sup>6</sup>They went to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, We have come from a distant country; now, therefore, make a covenant with us. ...<sup>14</sup>And the men of Israel examined their provisions, **but they did not seek counsel from Jehovah.** (Josh. 9:3-4a, 6,14)*

We are also tempted to do so at those times when the human solution appears to be the only alternative, as again in the case of Lot's daughters. Once more, we are tempted to do so at those times when the problem appears to be manageable, as in the case with Abraham recorded in Genesis 20:1-18.

Consider the counsel of Proverbs 3:5-6 (printed below) and the invitation/commandment of Psalm 50:15 (also printed below):

*Trust in Jehovah with all your heart, and do not depend upon your own understanding. <sup>6</sup>In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths.* (Prov. 3:5-6)

*Call to me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.* (Psl. 50:15)

## **II. Don't Neglect God in Your Thinking, Because You May Disgrace the Name of Christ**

We are told that Abraham journeyed south as far as the city of Gerar, where he and Sarah now took up their residence. As he had done on a previous occasion (note Genesis 12:11-13,) Abraham introduces Sarah as his sister (20:12.) It is a partial truth (she is his half-sister,) but because of their marital relationship, it is a lie and it has the potential of creating immoral consequences. It is a case of Abraham resorting to his own ingenuity rather than seeking either God's counsel or God's protection.

Before long Abimelech, the king of Garar, seeks to bring Sarah into his harem, either for her beauty, or because he sought to form an alliance with Abraham who was himself a wealthy nomadic prince. But before Abimelech could touch Sarah, the LORD sovereignly and miraculously intervened: He warned Abimelech that Sarah was a married woman, and possibly He imposed an illness on Abimelech to prevent him from touching Sarah (Gen. 20:6-7,17-18.)

Sometimes we neglect God in our everyday thinking precisely because we have a false view of miracles. We assume that we can neglect our routine spiritual maintenance and count on God to bail us out by a last minute miracle. But take note of Proverbs 14:16 and Proverbs 22:3, (printed below):

*A wise man fears and departs from evil; but the fool behaves himself with arrogance, and is confident.* (Prov. 14:16)

*A prudent man sees the evil and hides; but simple men* [i.e.; thoughtless men] *keep going, and suffer for it.* (Prov. 22:3). The Proverb literally says, *“the simple keep going and are mulched.”*

We must understand what miracles are and what they are not. Miracles are not routine divine occurrences. Miracles are not divine “bail outs.” Miracles are divine signs of the kingdom to come (occasional glimpses of what life is like in God’s heavenly kingdom.) Miracles are divine testimony to Christ and the gospel. Miracles are divine acts intended for the purpose of accomplishing God’s plan of redemption—as in the case of God divinely intervening to restrain Abimelech, If Sarah had conceived by Abimelech it would have been a travesty to bear the promised son by virtue of an adulterous relationship with a pagan king. Furthermore, there may always have been the question as to whether the promised son was fathered by Abraham or Abimelech.

When Abimelech learns the true state of affairs he summons Abraham. He then proceeds to accuse Abraham of doing *“things ... that ought not to be done”* (vs.9.) Abraham’s only defense is his false perception that these people do not fear God and consequently his life would be in danger (vs. 11.) Ironically, Abimelech shows himself to be more righteous than Abraham in this situation. He bestows upon Abraham possessions worth one thousand pieces of silver (vs. 14.) He then declares to Sarah that this payment *“shall pay for the offense against you before your whole household”* (vs. 16.) In other words, this payment is the acknowledgement that an offense was committed against Sarah, (she is innocent of adultery,) and this payment makes restitution to her and her whole household for that offense.

Don’t neglect God in your thinking, or you may disgrace the name of Christ. Abraham, who was supposed to be the source of blessing to the nations, (*“by you shall all the peoples of the earth be blessed,”* Gen. 12:3b,) almost brought the curse of death upon Abimelech and his people (Gen. 20:7.)

## **Conclusion**

Like Steve, like Lot’s daughters, like Abraham, we, too, are prone to neglect God in our thinking. But considering the detrimental effects such thinking inevitably produces, let us guard against the folly of neglecting God in our thinking.

What are some safeguards to follow in order to avoid neglecting God in our thinking? First, reject the fallacy that divides the issues of life into secular and spiritual compartments: all of life is spiritual because it is all lived before God and is supposed to be lived for His glory (note 1 Corinthians 10:31, *“Therefore, whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”*) Second, by developing a

consistent God-consciousness as described in Psalm 16:8, *"I have set Jehovah always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."*