

FOUR CHOICES EVERY SPIRIT-FILLED BELIEVER SHOULD MAKE

Choice #3: Spirit-Filled Believers Can Lead Their Lives & Families Like Abraham and Not Suffer the Losses Lot Suffered

Genesis 13-19

Anyone who has ever been in marketing, sales, or advertising knows that a celebrity endorsement can incredibly change the success of a product or service. Depending upon the popularity and believability of the celebrity, the impact can be profound.

The Greatest Family Endorsement of All Time

This morning as we open to Genesis 18, we are opening to what may be the greatest celebrity endorsement of parenting ever made in history. God Himself, the most trusted, expert source on any topic in the Universe tells us that He found in Abraham a quality He was looking for in parenting.

Please look with me at Genesis 18:16-19. Here, on the doorstep of disaster, when God wipes out an entire region filled with people because of their unrepentant immorality, God also endorses Abraham's parenting skills.

Genesis 18:16-21 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. ¹⁷ And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, ¹⁸ since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 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.***"

Pray

What Quality Was God Endorsing in Abraham?

God knew that Abraham would remember what God had shown him that He desired, and that Abraham would seek to obey what God's Word had revealed. It was not that Abraham was a perfect father. Abraham was never perfect.

There are ten individual situations¹ that Abraham faced from God that he fails three and passes seven. So Abraham had only a 70% score with God in the realm of passing tests of his faith. But God does not grade on a curve, God looks at the heart and sees whether even in our failures we want to obey Him.

That is all God has ever expected of us His children. Never perfection, never hopelessly trying; rather He asks us to take His powerful grace and choose to do what He says.

Each time we allow God to empower us, we triumph. Each time we do things on our own, or neglect God's Word, we fail.

Keeping the Way of the Lord

Look at the middle of Genesis 18:19. Notice what God wanted to continue in Abraham's line of descendants. In the Old Testament God's grace is operating, sustaining, and empowering saints to do what God desired for them to do.

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."

The desire God had for Abraham was that he teach his family to "keep" (the word in the NKJV of v. 19) which means that 'they watch out for what God has said'; and that that 'they honor God's plans'.

We can define this way of life as "to be far from perfection", because this is the very same word is used in David's testimony of how he lived his life (Psalm 18:21, 23).

For I have **kept**² the ways of the Lord, And have not wickedly departed from my God. 23 I was also blameless before Him, And I **kept** myself from my iniquity.

David was far from perfect, but God says that David's heart was un-deniably pointed at God, wanting God's ways, and seeking to follow God's Words.

This Hebrew word translated "keep" is most clearly ours as the word Ezra uses in Psalm 119:9 to every young person about keeping their life free from life-dominating sins (Psalm 119:9-11).

How can a young man cleanse his way? By **taking heed** according to Your word.
¹⁰ With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your

¹ (1) Gen. 12:1-9 waiting/Positive; (2) Gen. 12:10-18 trusting/Negative; (3) Gen. 13:1-18 investing/Positive; (4) Gen. 14:17-24 separating/Positive; (5) Gen 15:1-21 trusting/Positive; (6) Gen. 16:1-16 waiting/Negative; (7) Gen. 17:1-27 obeying/Positive; (8) Gen. 18:23-33 praying/Positive; (9) Gen. 20:1-18 trusting/Negative; (10) Gen. 22:1-19 sacrificing/Positive. Score: 70%.

² The same Hebrew word translated "keep" is also used to describe how King Saul's spies kept an eye on the entrance door to David's home, when they were tasked with capturing him (Psalm 59, Title). Psalm 59 (NKJV) To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy." A Michtam of David when Saul sent men, and they watched the house in order to kill him. They missed David's escape out the window (1 Sam 19:12), but they were there with a singular task, and they watched that door because they were sent to do that task.

commandments! ¹¹ Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

This is what God desires, what He expects, and what He empowers us by His grace to be able to do: if we choose to obey!

The Illustration of Keeping God's Ways

Perhaps the clearest picture of God's desires for His people on Earth is illustrated here in Genesis. The contrast between Lot's choices for himself and his family and Abraham's choices for himself and his family is astounding.

Join me back in Genesis 13 as we do a short biography of the personal choices of two great men, held up in God's Word as believers, and fellow-heirs of eternal life.

Abraham and Lot are both saints, we all know that about Abraham (Rom. 4), but many aren't aware of Lot's status. In II Peter 2:7 God describes Lot through Peter as "righteous Lot". So God justified Lot by faith, but Lot chose to live by sight, and kept his life anchored to this world and not Heaven. Lot is a picture of the sad consequences that face the carnal, or worldly believer.

Abraham, by faithful obedience, was an heir of rewards in glory for his obedient choices.

Lot made it "so as by fire" (I Cor. 3:15), and watched as his life's treasures were mostly consumed by the fire and brimstone that fell from God out of Heaven. Lot got to see literally and in his lifetime, the results everyone else will someday see at the Judgment Seat of Christ: anything tainted by the world gets burned up.

Lot lost everything that mattered in life because of a series of horrible choices he made to compromise his life with the world. That is what God wanted Abraham to teach and instruct and command his family after him to avoid³.

A Summary of Lot's Bad Choices

In four short verses we see the pathway of tragic consequence that all started with the Lot's encounter with what God's Word calls the "lust of the eyes" (I Jn. 2:15-17), the strong, unbridled desires for what we see.

*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*

³ Jesus even reminds us of this in His short challenge to: "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32).

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.

1. Unlike Abraham: Lot seemed to walk by sight and not by faith (Genesis 13:10).

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.

First we see that **Lot lifted up 'his eyes'**, not his heart in prayer, not his soul to the Lord his Maker, just his eyes. He relied upon his flesh's instinctive desires, which would end up paying him back bitterly in the end. Lot could only see what looked best.

2. Unlike Abraham: Lot chose what was the best for himself, not the best for God (Genesis 13:11).

Then **Lot chose for himself** all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.

Next we see God noting that **Lot 'chose for himself all'**. He took whatever was best for his agenda for life. Note that the Lord didn't even figure into that decision. No thought of the long-term effect of that choice. No seeking what God might want him to do. No it was all based on what was best for himself; and with that choice he showed that Lot was living for Lot.

Lot only looked for what he liked, and only saw what would profit him. Lot didn't ask himself about what pleased God, what might be useful for God, and what God would bless.

Lot seems to have been motivated by what John calls the "lust of the eyes". He lived for what he could see instead of what he could not see. Abraham lived for a city above (Heb. 11), but Lot lived for the here and now.

Abraham, who lived for the Lord, never built anything but altars, never bought any land except a plot to bury his beloved wife, and never lived in anything but a tent.

3. Unlike Abraham: Lot set his heart's desires on Sodom (Genesis 13:12-13).

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.**

Finally we see that Lot was comfortable with the evils of the world—'**Lot dwelt**'. The Hebrew word for pitched his tent means laced it right up against, or right on the edge.

Lot clearly placed himself by the world. Not just any manifestation of the world, he wasn't troubled at being surrounded by, living with, and sharing life with those who were 'exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord'.

These weren't normal sinners, these were aggressive enemies of God. Lot pointed his tent towards them, watched them, got comfortable with them, was drawn towards them, and finally moved in amongst them!

Lot's tent could face any direction he chose. He could have stepped out of his tent each day and looked towards where God's Friend Abraham lived, and thought of those altars.

Lot most likely sold his production from the flock to the big markets that fed Sodom. Lot was a good businessman, he succeeded in finding the best pastures for his flocks, the best markets for his sales, and the best views for his tent. The only One that seems to have been left out of all those choices was God.

Lot could have pitched his tent to face in the direction of any one of the three altars that his godly uncle Abraham had built to the God of Heaven (Genesis 12:7, 8; 13:4), but instead Lot oriented his tent, his heart, and the steps of his life towards Sodom.

Righteous Lot, as Peter calls him (I Peter 2:7) would find out, little by little, what James would later say: "Friendship with the world, is enmity with God" (James 4:4-10).

4. Unlike Abraham: Lot followed his deceitful heart, and moved into Sodom (Genesis 14:12a).

Genesis 14:12a They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son **who dwelt in Sodom,**

Usually what ever we look at long enough captures our hearts. Lot's treasures were in Sodom, so his heart moved their, then his body followed.

5. Unlike Abraham: Lot ignored the warning God left for him (Genesis 14:12b-16).

Genesis 14:12b, 16 They also **took Lot,** Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, **and his goods,** and departed. 16 **So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.**

God worked it out for Lot to see his godly uncle Abraham blessed, protected, enabled to do great things, and used of God. The rescue of Lot and all the other captives by a lone eighty-year-old man and his household servants was no less than an act of God.

But some people just don't get it. Lot didn't appear to take his near brush with disaster to heart. Lot was given a warning about how vulnerable he was dwelling where he lived, but doesn't seem to do anything about it. Abraham shows his disregard for any of the tainted by exceeding wickedness, earthly wealth: in not keeping any of the spoils (Gen. 14:18-24); but Lot was unshaken in his desire to live with the people of Sodom rather than the people of his godly uncle Abraham.

6. Unlike Abraham: Lot ruined his testimony for God in Sodom (Genesis 19:8-9).

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.

The people he lived among would not listen to him, and Lot began to make very poor choices, like offering his daughters to be sex objects for the perverted people he lived amongst (Gen. 19:8).

7. Unlike Abraham: Lot lost his testimony with his extended family (Genesis 19:14).

So Lot went out and spoke to **his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters**, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

It appears that Lot may have had more than two daughters, because he had two married daughters plus the two single ones. The sons-in-law thought Lot was joking as he warned them of the impending doom from God. They wouldn't listen, stayed, and were destroyed with Lot's married daughters.

8. Unlike Abraham: Lot was slow to obey God (Gen. 19:16).

And while he lingered, the men **took hold of his hand**, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they **brought him out and set him outside** the city.

When the angels plus God visited the nearly 100-year-old Abraham (Gen. 17:1 he was 99) in Gen. 18, Abraham "hurried" v.6, and "ran" in v.7, to respond to them.

What a difference we see between friendship with God that prompted Abraham to obey as swiftly as those ancient legs could move; and Lot's friendship with the world who dawdled, hesitated, and had to be dragged bodily by the angels away from the doom (Gen. 19:16).

9. Unlike Abraham: Lot seems to have lost everything that mattered except his eternal soul.

What did Lot's small choice to follow the lust of his eyes cost him? Lot's compromise, and his apparent love of the world, cost him dearly.

- Lot lost **his fellowship, accountability, and friendship with Abraham** when he separated from Abraham and moved into Sodom (Genesis 13:14). That uncle who loved him, shared God with him—was now not as interesting as the glittering lights on the horizon that marked the city of sin and fun.
- Lot lost **his testimony** (Genesis 19:9). The citizens of Sodom mocked him and said that he who lived among them couldn't comment on their lifestyle choices.
- Lot lost **half his family** who wouldn't leave and were destroyed with Sodom (Genesis 19:14). His own family mocked him when he warned them of God's pending destruction of the wickedness of Sodom.
- Lot lost **his ability to respond** to God when he was urged to flee and he lingered so long (Genesis 19:15-16) that the angels had to drag him by the hand out of the cauldron of destruction.
- Lot lost **his wife to God's judgment and destruction** (Gen. 19:26). She had been so blessed by God. She was given the opportunity to live with a man (Lot) who knew God, travel with a man who was God's friend (Abraham) and undoubtedly hear and see the wonders of God through their lives, see angelic messengers, witness their power to push away the crowd at the door of her home, strike them with blindness, and finally to hold the hand of an angel and be pulled toward the plan of God. And all that was not enough. Her soul longed for the world, her desires were so strong she couldn't obey the only command they gave her—'don't look back'.
- Lot lost **his moral integrity and honor** (Gen. 19:32-26).
- Finally, Lot lost **his legacy** as his children were defiled and their children (Genesis 19:36-38) became the enemies of God.

The Steps in Lot's Downfall

The downfall of Lot can be seen as:

- **Looking and longing** for the lusts of his eyes (Gen. 13:10-11);
- **Turning and facing** his world in the direction of Sodom (Genesis 13:12);
- **Packing up and moving** his family into the wickedest place on Earth at that time (Gen. 14:12); in all these choices Lot displayed the fact that his heart was in Sodom long before his body arrived there.

The Consequences of Not Resisting the World

Lot never restrained his physical eyes from controlling his life. Lot was a believer, but lived with the consequences of his lust instead of the blessings of faith.

Lot was tempted and didn't resist. In the end that small choice, as it seemed then, cost Lot everything. The steps to Lot's fatal choices are clearly written down for us in God's Word.

Thus the contrast—Lot lived for Lot, Lot picked the best for Lot, Lot looked at life through the lens of what makes Lot happy and successful, Lot amassed enough fortune to retire in the big city of wealth and entertainment, and Lot grew cold and distant from God.

Gradually any effect that living with Abraham, seeing Abraham's altars to God, hearing about Abraham's talks with God—all of that was gone. Lot's heart was in Sodom long before his body arrived there.

Lot was conformed to the world (Rom. 12:2). All that he lived for went up in smoke and was buried under ruins somewhere in the area around the Dead Sea. Lot is a warning to all believers not to love the world, become friendly with the world, or be stained by the world (James 1:27), because the day of reckoning finally comes.

"It would be difficult to decide whether or not Lot was a truly saved man by reading his story in the Old Testament.

He made no positive contribution to the life of faith.

He chose the lower, the carnal, the worldly path.

He left the fellowship of the faith at the earliest possible moment and was never restored to that fellowship.

He made no mark for God. His family ended in disaster.

The last we see of him in the narrative he is drunk and dishonored.

Indeed, were it not for a brief but remarkable statement of Peter written thousands of

years later (2 Peter 2:7-8) we would be justified in concluding that the root of the matter had never been in him at all.

Such is the life of a backslider. May God deliver us from a life like that."⁴

⁴ John Phillips, Exploring Genesis, Moody Press, Chicago, 1980, p. 164.