

When Abraham went out from his own country into the land of Canaan, one of those who went with him was a nephew, a young man named Lot. Lot spent his early years in Ur of Chaldea. His father, Haran, died while he was a youth of tender years, and he was placed in the family of his uncle Abraham, who appears to have acted towards him as an affectionate father. He went with Abraham down into Egypt and came back with him into Canaan. After their return to Canaan there took place an incident that made it necessary for Lot to make a choice. That choice affected his whole life afterwards.

At the time Lot made his choice he must have been a comparatively young man. His prospects in life were very bright. The advantages he had were many. Let us look at some of his advantages:----

1. In the first place he seems to have come from good stock for he was of the same family as Abraham. Taken all the way around, they were a good stock of people. Although they were not faultless they were a vigorous and thrifty race.
2. He was closely associated with Abraham.
This was an advantage to Lot. This comes out strikingly in their later history, as in the case when Abraham rescued him when he was being carried away captive.
3. He was wealthy
This is a blessing or advantage, though, only when a man properly uses his wealth. Wealth is a curse if a man becomes a slave to it. If he loves money more than he loves righteousness, if he worships mammon rather than God. The question is, Who is to be master, wealth or the man? If he makes wealth his servant and uses it for righteous purposes it is a blessing, but if he becomes a slave of wealth then it is a curse. So, in his wealth, Lot had a great advantage if he had only had sense and religion enough to use it right. However, his wealth was the occasion of his trouble with Abraham, and so did not prove to be such an advantage after all as we shall see later.
4. His character and relations with God were such that he was described in the New Testament as a righteous man.
When Abraham gave up home and all for the worship of God, Lot chose to go with him. That doubtless implies the religion of Jehovah was chosen as his religion. Doubtless the influence of Abraham over him led to this choice, but anyway, the choice was made and Lot was on the right road. He was in the right attitude toward God, and that meant much if he continued thus. Now think of what a future there was for such a young man. Good family, reasonably wealthy, in right relations with God, closely associated with Abraham, who was to be the founder of a new nation and a new religion that was to be the great world religion some day. His prospects were fine if he had only continued as he began on the right road. His power and influence for good in the world might have been great had he guided his life by the right principles.

The occasion of the trouble was the fact that Abraham and Lot were both cattlemen and their herds increased until they were very large. When they returned from Egypt, they were both very wealthy. In addition to their herds, the Canaanite and Perizzite were in the land and that restricted their range still more. No sooner had they become stationary in

the midst of these than they found the land was not able to furnish them with sufficient pasture and water. Water and pasture were scarce, therefore, strife arose between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot. This contention was unseemingly, untimely, and unnecessary, but still the most natural thing in the world. It has likewise occurred many times on the plains in the western part of the U. S. Often deadly feuds have sprung up between two large cattlemen and their fathers and bloodshed was the result. Perhaps Lot had taken up the quarrel and if Abraham had done so there might have been serious trouble. But he did not do so for he was too large-minded and magnanimous to quarrel over so small a matter. Abraham had good ground for contending for the territory. He might have said, "I am older and therefore the natural leader." This would have entitled him to first choice. Then Abraham was the head of the expedition and the others came with him. Then he might have pleaded the divine promise for the whole country had been promised to him and his descendants therefore, if either had any claim to priority it was Abraham. But did Abraham make these claims? Not a one. It occurred to him that this competition between relatives was unseemly and that some arrangement must be made.

When at last an unusually blunt quarrel took place in the presence of the chiefs, Abraham, divulges to Lot the scheme which had suggested itself to him. This state of affairs, he says, must come to an end; it is unseemly, unwise, and unrighteous. And as they walk on out of the circle of the tents to discuss the matter without interruption, they come to the highest point where the wide prospect brings them naturally to a pause. Abraham put aside all of his rightful claims and said, "All right Lot, if we cannot get along peaceably together we had better separate." Abraham looking north and south and seeing with the trained eye of a large flock-master that there was abundant pasture for both, turns to Lot with a final proposal: "Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself I pray thee from me: If thou wilt take the left hand then I will go to the right, or if thou depart to the right hand then I will go to the left." In other words, you choose the part of the country you want and I'll take the rest. Abraham here showed a fine quality of good common sense. He saw that if two companies cannot get along together they had better separate. He showed a wonderful spirit. There was not a trait of selfishness shown in his conduct. Most people insist on having rights but Abraham was willing to give up some of his rights for the sake of peace. This proposal of Abraham shows:-----

1. That a good man loves peace rather than wealth because:--
 - (1) Strife hardens the heart
 - (2) Destroys a man's happiness
 - (3) Strife hinders one's spiritual progress
 - (4) Strife exposes true religion to contempt
 - (5) Strife destroys the sacred religion of kinship
2. That a good man does not put the main emphasis of life upon worldly goods.
3. That a good man has confidence in the Ruler of the Universe----
 - (1) Abraham had confidence in the wisdom of God
 - (2) He had confidence in the love of God

In this separation Abraham displayed:-----

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| 1. Great peaceableness | 2. Large-hearted generosity |
| 3. Unselfishness | 4. Sense of justice |
| 5. Attitude of real statesmanship | 6. Magnanimity |
| 7. Willingness to abide by Lot's decision and take what he left. | 8. Heavenly wisdom |
| 9. Humility | 10. Faith |
| 11. Forbearance | 12. Forgetfulness of self |

Who were the disputants?----

1. They were related to each other
2. They were professors of the same religious faith

Cause of the separation---Prosperity

The enlargement of a man's possessions is very oftne the contracting of his heart. As long as they had little wealth they could live together in peace. The men who had shared one another's fortune while comparatively poor, no sooner became wealthy than they had to separate. So it is today that wealth causes---

1. Strife
2. Sorrow
3. Separation

LOT'S CHOICE ----

I. His Motive

1. Not expectation of better religious advantages
2. Not hopes of benefiting others
3. To advance his worldly interests. It was preeminently a selfish choice.

II. What Lot Took Into Account When He Made This Choice

1. His own worldly circumstances
2. Suitability of the Jordan circle to advance them
3. His ambition to become much richer
4. His desire to excel Abraham in worldly goods and become rich faster.

III. What Lot Did Not Take Into Account When He Made This Choice

1. Reverence due to his uncle
2. The greater right of Abraham had to the soil of Canaan
3. Danger of parting with Abraham, thus forfeiting the sympathy and assistance of a good man.
4. Risk of damage to his spiritual interests in settling in the Jordan circle. His choice was antagonistic to the good moral training of his family. Moral culture is more important than wealth because:----

- (1) It is of higher value
- (2) It elevates a man
- (3) It guarantees more beneficial results

5. That wickedness and two of the most wicked cities ever known were there. What he was after was a place to make money. He wanted grass and water for his cattle.
6. Moral atmosphere into which he was moving. It put money above moral welfare of his family. He chose a great estate but bad neighbors; material glory but moral shame. He moved into the Jordan valley as a moneymaker rather than a missionary.
7. Religious state of the neighborhood.

He did what men are doing today, namely, chose a home without knowing the religious atmosphere. Men often do not care how poor the church is, if the farm is good. They will tell you if the house is roomy, the garden is large, air is balmy, district is genteel, and if you ask them what religious teaching they will have there, they will tell you they do not really know but must inquire.

It was a perilous hour in the history of Lot when he consented to part with his religious privileges, to leave the holy land for a land of paganism, and separate himself from his spiritual friend and guardian to dwell with wicked men. Going toward Sodom was:-----

1. An inviting journey
2. A gradual journey
3. A sinful journey
4. A dangerous journey

How long he remained on the plains we do not know but the next thing we do know is that he is in Sodom. Sodom was a very wicked city and Lot lived near it so he went into it with his eyes open, for he knew all about it. Becoming more familiar with their sins he has less repugnance for them and soon he is in the midst of the wicked city. The people of Sodom declared their sins in a most open and unblushing manner, therefore, aware of their wickedness, Lot determined to run the risk. Business took him there rather than the moral and spiritual welfare of his family. Business was the first consideration with him. All the years that he spent in Sodom we hear nothing about a family altar. Soon after arriving there though he is in trouble. Sodom had a war on hand and when he went into the city he had to take its side. In the war he was taken captive. Abraham heard this and set out after him and brought him back. It seems then that he never would have returned to the city. But he went back and prospered. His daughters were looked upon as the most fashionable people there. Matrimonial alliances soon developed between the members of his family and the Sodomites. His wife moved in the more select society of the city. The cardinal sins of the Sodomites were:-- pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness.

IV. What He Gained By Making This Choice

1. A more comfortable and luxurious abode than Abraham
2. A more rapid increase of wealth at the beginning
3. A home in Sodom
4. Worldly goods for his children

V. What He Lost By Making This Choice

1. The society of his best friend
2. His intense hatred of wickedness
3. Helpful influence of Christian fellowship
4. Moral tone and character
5. Peace of mind
6. Liberty
7. Happiness

He never again enjoyed happy days after leaving Abraham's tents. His soul was daily vexed. Often after hearing his sons-in-law talk he would go out with a sore heart, longing for the company he used to enjoy with Abraham.

8. His property
9. His adherents
10. His influence over his children
11. His children
12. His wife
13. His good name

PRACTICAL LESSONS FROM THIS SELFISH CHOICE AND ITS RUNINOUS RESULT---

1. It teaches the wisdom of seeking spiritual rather than temporal good.
2. One should never make a choice without consulting God
3. One wrong step in the choice of any of the following makes a wreck of one's whole career---
(1) Place of residence. (2) Profession (3) Life Partner
4. The man who leaves God and His purpose out of his life is never wise and never comes to true success
5. The man who lives the selfish life, and puts money ahead of moral and spiritual concerns is the man who lives in vain.