

Faith vs Sight

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living by faith rather than by sight, using the story of Abram and Lot as a key illustration.

Duration: 24:59

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of trusting in God and being true to His word. He highlights the negative consequences of people fussing and fighting with each other instead of relying on God. The preacher encourages the congregation to have faith like Abraham and to trust that God will take care of them. He warns against making decisions based solely on what looks good in the sensory world, emphasizing the need for faith and seeking God's guidance in all aspects of life.

Transcript

Here's a story from the book of Genesis. Let's look at it. Genesis 13 verse 1. So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him.

Abraham had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. From the Negev, which is the southern part of Israel, very desert-y, he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai, where his tent had been earlier, and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the Lord.

Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. And quarreling arose between Abram's herders and Lot's.

The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. So Abram said to Lot, let's not have any quarreling between you and me or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company.

If you go to the left, I'll go to the right. If you go to the right, I'll go to the left. Lot looked around and he saw that the whole plain of the Jordan towards Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt.

This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. So Lot chose for himself, so Lot chose for himself, so Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan. And he set out toward the east and the two men parted company.

Abram lived in the land of Canaan while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord. This is a picture of the difference between living by faith and living by sight.

Abraham is the man, I'll call him Abraham, the name he got later. Abraham is the model to us in the Old Testament of living by faith. Lot here in this story is a prime example of what it is to live by sight, not to follow God and the invisible plan he has for your life, but to go by what your senses tell you.

He saw that the land looked good. Little did he know what was waiting for him over there. Now it's interesting that Abraham left where he was in Genesis 12 and further east from Israel, Ur of the Chaldees.

He was called from there and he went out and left everything. He had nothing really with him. He just went by faith.

He went because God had directed him. He couldn't prove God was directing him. He couldn't prove there was a God, but he knew in his heart God had spoken to him and he was going to obey this God who had revealed himself to him.

He took along his nephew Lot and Lot was going along with him. And that took some courage to step out and go with your uncle who's a lot older than you and follow him, not knowing where he was going. How could Lot know where he was going? Abraham didn't know where he was going.

He was following God. Many times when you follow God, you don't know where you're going. You just know God is going with you.

And when God is going with you, it doesn't matter if you don't know where you're going because God is going with you. And if you know where you're going and God is not with you, you're going to the wrong place. How many say amen? So Abraham takes off and Lot goes with him.

And then we find out this interesting thing that because Abraham was moving by faith, God blessed him. When people obey God and move by faith and trust God, even though it doesn't look good, God has a way of blessing you. In the Old Testament it's especially with silver and gold and possessions.

In the New Testament, it's a kind of blessing often. So Abraham is being blessed by God because he's operating by faith. Now Lot, because he's just with Abraham, is blessed just because he's with the man of faith.

While Abraham is multiplying goats and sheep and all kinds of cattle and belongings, silver and gold, Lot, just because he's with him, is getting the runoff of the blessing. Isn't that something? Boy, it makes you want to hang around people that God is blessing. Amen? I wonder how many children and nephews and nieces have blessings that have just come to them because of an aunt or an uncle or a parent or a mother or a father or a grandmother or a grandfather who believed God and the blessing came on them.

And because you're in the family, it has run down to you. It should be a lesson for all of us. I want to follow God.

I want to be like that mother, that father, that grandmother, grandfather, auntie, uncle, who was trusting God. So now Lot is being blessed, a runaway blessing because of Abraham's faith and obedience. And then the Bible tells us that the blessing became too much.

Many times, blessing causes problems. The blessing of God sometimes brings problems. What was the problem? Well, it was a good kind of problem.

They had so much, they couldn't live together because the land couldn't bear all of the cattle of both of them, all of the sheep and their herders and servants were starting to fuss with each other. They had to dig wells to get water. That became a problem.

So now because of the blessing of God, there was an abundance that brought problems. It's like in a church, you have so many people coming sometimes that then you don't know. How about overflow? Where are the people going to sit? Why is that lady saving a seat and nobody's in that seat? We won't go there, all right? We'll just move on.

Let's go back to Abraham quickly. So, and then it goes on and on and the people, and you have problems. So you have to figure out what the problems are.

So when my wife started the choir, there were nine voices. Two of the people out of the nine were tone deaf. That's the truth.

And then one never left the choir. She was in the choir for 30 years. She still couldn't sing after 30 years, but my wife didn't have the heart to just say, I'm sorry.

But now it's different. So now there's other problems. There were not problems with nine and now you're making recordings and you're doing a lot of other things.

It's the blessing of God. How many choirs can make recordings and sing as they did in front of a billion people at their last inauguration? But then there's problems with that. How do you get there? And how long do you have to freeze, sit in the freezing cold? Ask them about that.

Some of them are still trying to get warm from that visit to Washington DC. So there's problems with the blessing of God. The blessing of God just doesn't come with no problems.

And you can't get discouraged by it. You got to be thankful you have those problems. So there, here was the problem.

They were too much for the land and the herders began to fight. And I just want you to notice as I close with this is we need to pray and maybe someone really needs to hear this. Maybe I'm going to save somebody from the wrong marriage, the wrong decision, the wrong job, the wrong house, the wrong apartment.

Please listen, please listen. So notice that the man of faith doesn't want to quarrel. People who want to quarrel and fuss and fight don't have faith.

They're going to fight you over every little nickel, every little dime, every little square inch. They're always looking, you're trying to get over on me and all of that. Not Abraham.

Abraham says, God is with me. No, God is with me. We can't quarrel.

When you're a man of faith, you should be a man of peace. There's nothing worse than quarreling. He didn't want quarreling within the family.

Notice it says there that the parasites and Jebusites were in the land at that time. Why would it say that? Because that would be a shame for the heathen to see God's chosen people fussing with each other, much less a nephew and his uncle. Imagine fighting among each other in front of unbelievers.

And that's a good lesson for us. The worst thing you can do as a Christian is fuss and fight with another Christian. Oh, that didn't get as many amens as it should have, but we won't go there either, okay? I know because a lot of people are strong for the Lord, but they're also strong in their personality to fight with everybody.

Fussing and fighting. That's why ministers have the highest rate of heart attacks of any profession in America. It's not because of getting sermons.

What are you kidding me? You do this for a while, you can get a passage, get a loan, analyze it, come up with three points and a conclusion. That's not what gives you a heart condition. It's people fussing and fighting with each other.

All kinds of crazy things that people do and then saying that, you know, they belong to the Lord. Someone, oh, I don't even want to think about it. All the things.

I'm going to write a book. Karen and Faola, who work with me, have always encouraged me to write that book. Of all my experiences, the book would be called either Don't Ask or Stop It.

Just stop it. All the things that you see we do to each other, it just makes you want to cry. Let's not quarrel.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. How many want to be peacemakers and not quarrelers, fussing, fighting? So now we come to the close. So notice the man of faith again.

He not only doesn't want to quarrel, he is so laid back, it's frightening. Because as they have to decide who goes where, he goes, hey, you pick. You pick.

No, he's the oldest. He's the uncle. He's the one who God spoke to.

He's the father of all those who believe. But he says to his nephew, we can't live together because we're going to fuss and fight, especially the herders. I don't want to fight with you.

So let's divide. Well, where should we go? Pick wherever you want. Because wherever you pick, God's still going to be with me.

God's going to take care of me. I don't have to get anxiety attacks. I don't have to worry because God is with me.

Don't you want to have more of that faith in your life instead of anxiety biting your nails? When does she have to, when is he? It's like God. I know of a person who the parents favored one child. So when they left the inheritance, the father died first.

And when he left the inheritance, they discovered that he favored his daughter and gave the daughter a half of whatever the inheritance would be. And the other two children only got a quarter each. They didn't even get a third.

Now, why should that happen? But if you have faith in God, let her have the half. I have God with me. He's seeing what's going on.

Don't you think God's going to take care of you? Come on. How many know God's going to take care of you? You don't have to fuss and fight over every nickel and dime. Oh, I don't like to be around people always looking like someone's taking advantage of them.

God's with us. So now here comes the crux of the whole thing. So Lot looks and he goes, that is looking so good over there.

Did he pray? Did he ask God what God wanted? No, it's looking good over there. It's well watered. It's greener than the other side.

Oh, it always looks greener on the other side. And the Bible says he went and pitched his tent in Sodom and Gomorrah. He ended up picking where God was going to destroy.

And he just barely got out and his wife didn't make it. And in the next chapter or two, Abraham has to go ride, get a little posse together and rescue him because he gets trapped in a war between three Kings and two Kings. And then later on, Abraham learns from the angel of the Lord that the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah had gotten so horrible.

What cry? The cry of homosexual rape, of regular rape, of children being abused, of children seeing things they shouldn't see. Some kind of cry went up to God. And now the angel of the Lord, God in some angelic form said, I'm not going to hide this from Abraham because he's my friend.

And then Abraham realized, oh my goodness, where Lot, my nephew picked is going to go up and smoke. And then he has to intercede and pray. You know, he has that fight with God.

If there's a hundred righteous, wouldn't you save it for how about 50 for 50? Look, I shouldn't be saying this, but how about 40 and then 30 and then down all of that. Faith says, God, you show me what to do and I'll follow you. Living by sight says, whatever looks good, that's what I want.

Oh, she looking fine. She might be looking fine, but God has something finer possibly for you. And he's looking so good or that looks so good.

It's amazing to me. It really is. I'm so happy early on, I guess, because we had nothing.

And I was afraid of making any decision without trying to get God's guidance. Although I have failed many times, but I want to just testify to you here as I close. You can't beat God's way.

You cannot beat God's way. Can we say amen to that? You cannot beat trusting God. When you trust God, trust in the Lord at all times.

Trust in the Lord. Don't go by what your eyes tell you. You don't know what's around the curve.

It looks good now, but when you make that curve, you don't know what's waiting on the other side. Bad things can happen to good people because they stop trusting God. And what a lesson for us.

How could you have an uncle like Abraham and not learn to trust God? Didn't Abraham disciple you? Don't you see what God is doing with him as he trusts God? No, you're going to just see the senses, just the sensory world, the eyesight, the ear, what looks good. I want this. I want that.

No, I'm going to choose that. That looks better. You don't know that that job might look better, but that job might not be better.

It's not in the math only. You could make more money and lose in the end. And you could make less and win in the end.

How many believe what I'm talking about? Can we say amen? You got to have the faith. You got to have the faith that says, God show me what to do. I got to believe.

I don't usually talk about these things on a Tuesday night and the Lord kept me up with this last night and again today. So this gotta be someone that he wants me to try to help. Close your eyes with me.

If you're here at a crossroads and you got to make a decision, social decision, romantic financial job, you know, we make decisions. And here's the point of this story. Decisions have repercussions.

You just don't make a decision. And then everything always works out. Lot made a bad decision and all what repercussions his children grew up in hell.

They grew up in hell all the time because he thought it'll be nicer there for the family. It's better to live in a mountain alone with God than live in some mansion. Oh, listen, I've seen that over and over with relatives on Carol's side and my side.

What looks good is not always good. If you're here and you need to just ask God to increase your faith and you need direction from him about a decision. I got to believe that's why he put this on my heart.

I say that humbly in front of God. I have to believe that's why this is so compelling, that maybe someone's visiting, someone's here for some reason and you're just facing today like a decision. There's a fork in the road and maybe you're tending toward what looks good and what seems right in your logic.

That's what you're going to do without checking with God. Oh, please check with God. Please bring it to God.

Anyone here who I can just pray with and who wants to wait before the Lord for five or 10 minutes? Just get out of your seat and come forward and say, I need a word from God about that daughter, about that son. I don't know what to do with them. I'm at my wits end.

I don't know what to do with the mortgage that I can't pay anymore. The rent, I can't meet it. My budget, what do I do now? Someone says I should call this guy and he'll get me out of it.

But is that what God wants me to do? God, I need a word from you. I want to live by faith. I want to trust you.

Father, you said that just shall live by faith, not just get saved by faith. That most of us understand that it's not by the works of the law that we are justified, but by faith in Christ. But you didn't say we would just get saved by faith.

You said that just shall live by faith. Every day would be a faith day. Forgive us for trusting our senses rather than trusting you.

Forgive us, have mercy on us for making decisions based on the eye rather than the spirit of God. And a lot of us here, Lord, have bruises and cuts and scrapes that have come from the repercussions of wrong decisions. But today we bring our situations to you.

Show us the way we should go. Give answers, give wisdom. Didn't you say in your word we will hear a voice behind us saying, this is the way, walk in it.

Be true to your word. Be true to your word, Almighty God. Be true to your word.

If we don't know what to do, will you not, Heavenly Father, show your children what to do? Because we trust you today. We'd rather have Jesus than silver and gold. We'd rather have Jesus than houses and land.

Make us like Father Abraham, who was so confident that you would take care of him, that he could just relax. Don't let us quarrel and don't let us fret. The people who are standing in front of me, God, give them tonight the sleep, the blessed sleep of the person who trusts in God.

Not anxious, not afraid, not biting their nails, but resting in their God. Sure that God is going to take care of them. So we give you our situations.

And now we ask you as we wait before you to direct us in the way we should go. If we start to move in a way, God, that's not of you, take away the peace that we have. Give us a warning.

Give us a signal. This is not of God. There's something wrong here.

Even though we can't explain it, show it to us, Lord. And the way that we should go, give us extra peace and confirmation, even a word from another Christian, even a verse or a line of a song that will just confirm, this is the way God wants me to go. But we are not going to worry.

We will not fret. We will not be anxious because our God is in control. Our God is in control.

Can we put our hands together and say out loud, our God is in control. Our God is in control. Direct this church and its leadership in the way we should go.

Don't let us go any way that's not of you. As Pastor Burgos prayed earlier today in my office, Lord, show us if we're moving any way out of your will in any decision we make. And we just thank you that we can bring every situation to you.

Everyone who stepped forward now, Lord, is going to be a man or a woman of faith in a new way. Starting today, we are walking in the footsteps of Father Abraham. And Abraham believed God.

And Abraham believed God. And Abraham believed God. We thank you, Lord, that he trusted you and you proved faithful.

Everybody sitting, stand. Everyone stand in the building. Join hands with the person next to you.

Come on, let's all join hands together. And now, God, I ask that tonight the love of the Father will abide upon us. The grace of our Lord Jesus will be filling our lives and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit will be our sweet portion.

The Spirit of God leading and talking to his people. Thank you, God, for this service. Bless all the workers, Lord, who are helping with the Summer Fun Week.

Give them strength for tomorrow, Lord. Bless those children. Let the Spirit of God come upon those children as they learn about Jesus.

We pray for the prayer centers in the street. We pray for every worker. Get all of us home, Lord, safe and sound.

We ask this in Jesus' name. And everyone said, turn around and hug somebody. Come on, hug a bunch of people.

The Lord be with you.

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