

Abraham: The Life of Faith - Part 3

by Roy Hession

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in trusting God's plan and promises, even when it seems impossible or uncertain.

Duration: 54:56

Scripture: Genesis 13:5, Psalm 105:11, Acts 7:5

Topics: "Abraham"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Lot from the Bible and the choices he made. Lot's decision was based solely on personal advantage and he judged it by what he saw with his eyes. The preacher emphasizes that when God calls someone, they are called to something glorious, even if it seems impossible. The sermon warns against making choices that prioritize personal gain over following Jesus, as it can lead to drastic consequences.

Transcript

Will you turn to the book of Genesis chapter 13. We shall begin reading at verse 5. Genesis 13 verse 5. We have seen Abraham as a penitent man coming back from that most unfortunate sojourn of his in Egypt, back to the land, back to the place where his tent had been pitched at the beginning. He's in the land which God has promised him.

Verse 5. And Lot also which went with Abraham had flocks and herds and tents and the land was not able to bear them that they might dwell together for their substance was very great so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abraham's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abraham said unto Lot let there be no strife I pray thee between me and thee and between my herdmen and thy herdmen for we be brethren is not the whole land before thee separate thyself I pray thee from me if thou will 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.

And Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan that it was well watered everywhere before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah even as the garden of the Lord like the land of Egypt as thou comest unto Zohar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan and Lot journeyed east and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abraham dwelled in the land of Canaan and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent towards Sodom.

But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. And the Lord said unto Abraham after that Lot was separated from him lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art northward and southward eastward and westward for all the land which thou seest to thee will I give it and to thy seed forever and I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth so that if a man can number the dust of the earth then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it for I will give it unto thee.

Then Abraham removed his tent and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre which is in Hebron and built there an altar unto the Lord. God's call to Abraham as we've seen was linked with a promise it was a call with a glorious purpose in view as is ours. And the promise to Abraham had two elements in it first of all it promised him the possession of a land the land in which he was a stranger it was going to be his and that of his seed.

And then the other element of the promise even more important was that he was to have a seed and that this seed was going to become a great nation it was going to be as the dust of the earth and of the stars of heaven for multitude. That this nation this seed was going to be that in which all nations of the earth were going one day to be blessed obviously looking forward to the fact that Jesus himself was to be born of that nation of the seed of Abraham. Now both these elements of the promise promised seemed impossible of fulfillment at the time that the promise was given.

It seemed quite impossible to Abraham judged according to the seeing of the eyes that he should possess that land for no sooner had he got into the land than we read the Canaanite was then in the land it wasn't an empty land and they weren't going to give possession easily to him. And then with regard to the seed that seemed completely impossible fulfillment for Sarah his wife was barren. And as the years went by and no child came she got to the place when it wasn't normally possible for a woman to have a child.

Now the impossibility of these promises is brought up by two verses one in the old testament and one in the new. Psalm 105 verse 11. Most interesting verse.

Psalm 105 verse 11 referring to the covenant made to Abraham we read God said to him Psalm 105 verse 11 unto thee will I give the land of Canaan the lot of your inheritance when they were but few men in number yea very few and strangers in it. A little handful little family were promised this great land. It seemed ludicrous and it is made even clearer the two-fold impossibility in Acts 7 verse 5. Once again referring to Abraham and Stephen says in verse 5 Acts 7 verse 5 he gave him none inheritances in it no not so much as to sit his foot on yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession and to his seed after him when as yet he had no child.

And in that way God acted in a way that is characteristic of himself. In Romans 4 we read God is the God who calleth those things that be not as though they were. He moves with consummate skill in that area of things which to man seem impossible and he delights to promise things that at the time of the promise seem impossible of fulfillment.

Now that's just not an occasional thing that's God that is characteristic of him and you're not to be surprised if you find yourself in a situation where the answer would seem to be an impossibility that's where God normally dwells. Faith mighty faith the promise seems and looks to that alone laughs at impossibilities and cries it shall be done and our faith has got to match God's promise. And in as much as God's promise refers so often to things unseen and things thought impossible our faith has got to match it.

Got any rivers you think are uncrossable? Got any mountains you can't tunnel through? God specializes in things thought impossible doing the things you think no man can do. If that's God our faith has got to match it or else you go right under. And so this life of faith is something it really is and obviously it can only develop as we're put into situations where God's got to do what we can't see we can't imagine.

We've got to believe he's going to do me good at my latter end because that's always the intention of his loving heart. Now yesterday and today we are dealing with the one element of that promise the land. On Thursday and Friday we shall deal with the even more important element of the promise the seed.

Now yesterday we saw the difficulties that Abraham had with himself first of all in getting into the land and then staying in the land when he got into it. And they were basically all difficulties due to unbelief. Just because of a famine he just couldn't believe that God could provide for him in that land of promise and he compromised went into Egypt and that led him to all those unfortunate things we heard about yesterday in which the very purpose of God was nearly nearly wrecked.

Would have been but for the grace of God intervening at the right moment. I've got to tell you it was no thanks to Abraham. If Abraham is called to be the man of is called the man of faith by succeeding generations no thanks to Abraham.

With God taking all the initiative he was comparing him to become a man of faith otherwise he would have been finished so with us. Now today we're still dealing with the land but with a much more positive side how Abraham his faith how his faith really did match the promise of God and how he really did possess that land by faith. He possessed it by faith completely if not in fulfillment.

Indeed he got it as surely in faith long before he got it in fulfillment. He didn't even bother too much about the fulfillment he says what's the point I've got it in the promise of God and he acted as if he had. And so we see him really being helped to rise to that right position of faith in God's promise.

And of course the whole thing comes out in this story of Abraham and Lot that you would like to turn back to it Genesis 13. Well there's the story Lot was Abraham's nephew and they were involved together. God had prospered both of them their flocks and their herds had multiplied and there was difficulty between the herdsmen of those men.

And that was all the more reprehensible because the Canaanite and the Perizzite were in the land watching. And that's what happens when the difficulty between brethren today the world watching. They're taking note behold how these Christians love one another say they.

And it was quite obvious something had to be done. And you see Abraham making what looks like a very magnanimous stand in saying we've got to separate you Lot and me. And he said if you take the left hand I'll take the right.

In other words Lot make your choice choose whichever part of the land you like and you go there and I'm willing to have just what is left. And so of course that gave Lot a tremendous chance first pick. And we read in verse 10 that Lot lifted up his eyes.

And he made his choice according to the sight of his eyes and purely on the basis of personal advantage. And he chose what looked like to be the most fertile part. The cities of the plain where Sodom and Gomorrah were.

It wasn't fertile after God had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah but it says it was before that. Wonderful fertile plain and he chose that. And Abraham was content for him to take the pick.

Lot then chose for himself. What about Abraham? Abraham didn't choose for himself. God chose for Abraham.

Lot chose for himself. God chose for Abraham and yet Abraham did choose. Indeed he did a great deal more choosing that day than Lot did.

Shall I tell you the great choice that Lot made that Abraham made? It was a terrific choice. He chose not to choose. That's a choice I tell you.

It must have been a struggle. He was the senior man. This was the land that God had promised him.

And here he is. Is he going to let this other man have first pick? And he chose not to choose. He said I'm not going to choose.

I'd like to be blindfolded. I'm going to let God choose for me. Now by whatever means did Abraham come to this choice? How did he get to the place where he chose not to choose? And once again we come to the central thing in Abraham's life.

It was by faith Abraham chose not to choose. He got this promise of God unto thee and to thy seed will I give this whole land. And Abraham was content so to be confident that God had got his life in his hands, that God was planning it.

That it's all part of an eternal purpose that he could afford not to choose. But it was a big surrender and I imagine not without a struggle. And he gave up his rights.

He didn't give them up to Lot. He gave them up to God. And it was all because he knew that God was on his side, that God had got a plan, that there was no accident, that everything was going according to schedule.

He said now you take first choice. And he did so by faith. Now you and I live in a world where everyone is choosing for themselves.

And they choose purely on the ground of sight what looks best for them. And they're choosing purely for personal advantage. They've got really no other motive than personal advantage and they judge personal advantage by the seeing of the eye.

Now listen we Christians have got to be utterly separated and different from the world in this deepest matter of all. We've got to be men who let God choose for us. Who as the chorus says, leave the choice to Him.

But that's not something passive. In doing that you are making, I am making, a very big critical choice and you'll know when you've made it. Up to a point you were all unrested.

Everybody else is on the ground all getting ahead of you. And you nearly got into the rat race with them. Maybe you did for a time and then God dealt with you.

And there came a great moment when you chose. When you chose not to choose. When you chose politely to retire from the rat race.

When you took your place with an unseen God through faith in his promises, knowing that God had some better thing for you. And his purpose wasn't being personal advantage, it was advantage of others. More than that, it is glory because he gets glory in the blessing of others.

And the man who's learning to live by faith is motivated by another principle of which the world knows absolutely nothing. They can't understand it. It isn't mere consecration.

It's faith. I'm called. I've been separated from the gospel.

There's a blueprint for my life. Not a selfish one, but a glorious one. And it's not getting miscarried even if everybody else seems to be elbowing me out of the way.

And you know this old temptation? It comes up so often. You always feel that the other side of the valley is greener than where you are. Oh the devil I bless you.

So you think the best thing is to get over to the other side of the valley. And it's no different, perhaps a bit worse. Everybody else is having a better time than you are.

We've got to repent, repent of it. And positively the only answer is to lay hold of the fact there cannot be anything better, sweeter, fuller for me than what God has purposed for me. I want to tell you this choice not to choose, this choice to leave the choice with God is only possible by faith.

And faith always implies many acts of self-judgment because none of us slip into it easily or naturally. God may have to show you where you've been trying to get in with the rat race, where you think other people are having a better time than you are, that even other Christians are. It is a big, big thing when we choose not to choose, knowing that the purpose of love and grace for me cannot be scattered.

It will though if I start choosing. Oh the application of this, I'm thinking for a moment of young people. In youth it's a time of choice, as never was, as never is any other time.

Career, girlfriend, boyfriend, life partner, job, Christian service. He knows, he loves, he cares. Nothing this truth can dim.

He gives the very best to those that leave the choice to him. But you've got to come to that choice to leave it to him. Oh what mistakes, what sorrows we've involved in ourselves in because we tried to grab, we tried to pluck unripe fruit.

Maybe he did have this and that for you in his plan, but it was for then, not now, but you wanted it now. We got so unrested because everybody else had a girlfriend that we hadn't. Every other girl had a boyfriend.

Fred, are you prepared to wait for God? Campbell Morgan has a wonderful definition of this, of faith, and it says, faith is the power to do without what God has promised till God in his infinite wisdom provides the thing promised. Meantime Jesus is enough. You'll only do that by faith.

That is faith. Let's get it again. Faith is the power to do without what God has promised, which quite possibly is, and even obviously may be in God's purpose for you, but you'll carry over the faith to wait to do without it until God in his infinite wisdom provides the thing promised.

But what about the waiting period? Jesus says, am I not enough to thee? Am I not better to thee than ten husbands? Very painful experience to have ten husbands, I should say. Well, and so it is with every other thing. Some of us are at the crossroads.

What's going to happen? And oh, how easy to think up some way out for ourselves, which is born so often of unbelief. But Abraham was confident that now he was growing in faith in this great Jehovah of this, and he was willing not to choose, to let God choose and let Lot have the first pip. And after it was over, perhaps he was tempted to self-pity and soreness, when he saw that very advantageous tract of country going to Lot, then it was Jehovah appeared to him.

There's an interesting link up, if you like, of two phrases, verse 10 and verse 14. Lot lifted up his eyes, but after Lot had separated himself from Abraham, the Lord said to Abraham, verse 14, lift up now thine eyes, have a good look round, look to all points of the compass, Abraham. And he said, all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, unto thy seed forever, and I'm going to make your seed as the dust of the earth.

Arise, walk through the land of it, it's your estate. Walk through it as yours. It's all going to be yours, even that part that Lot has chosen.

And that day God gave him the title deeds of the whole land, even as I've said, that which Lot chose. And you know, when there's been that costless surrender, you choose not to choose, to leave it with God to choose for you. Maybe it means giving up some cherished little plan, it might be some premature boyfriend, or it might be some nicely cooked up scheme along some other line.

I know that Jesus always delights to appear to his earth. And here you'll have such sweet seasons, lift up now thine eyes. And he'll give you sweet intimations of all the grace that is for you, all he's got for you in his promise and purpose.

He does give the very best to those that leave the choice with him. And when it comes, it comes with no regret, nothing bitter or sour about it, no tears associated with it. How different from those who try to make their own choice.

It was said of David, when he nearly tried to defend himself, and that woman stopped him from taking vengeance on, who was it, Abigail, talked to her husband, can't remember the name. She said, when the Lord has brought you to the throne, it will be no offense of heart to you that you shed blood causeless. You got there without lifting a finger, without doing anything dishonorable, with nothing to hide.

Had he took vengeance on that particular man, Nabal was the man. Abigail was his wife who pleaded with David not to take vengeance on that worthless man. When he got there, he had no offense of heart, no regrets.

Isn't that worthwhile? To find that God leads you to that happy home, no offense of heart, no sad memories of false starts and things going wrong. Maybe you were tempted to grab things as others were, but you were walking with Jesus. He kept on saying, lift up now your eyes, there's something better thing for you.

And it's promised in fact, that career, that place of service, the next step in the unfolding of your life, and it comes. And when it comes, you enter into it with no offense of heart. This is the path for the man of faith.

I mentioned yesterday those apparently too contradictory words in Hebrews 11, where it says that Abraham received the promises, and yet it also says he died without having received the promises. He received the promise as a promise, though he did not receive the fulfillment of the promise. He received the promise here, he did walk through it, the whole place is mine.

But he didn't receive the fulfillment of the promise, not in his lifetime. And you know his seed to this very day, having received the complete fulfillment of the promise, that land has never been completely possessed, even by Israel. It's going to be.

But you know, it didn't seem to bother Abraham. The promise was as good of a fact to him. He said in any case, I'm only one family, what's the use of the whole land to me? I can only sleep on one bed in one tent.

So I don't need the whole land yet, but it's mine. And he walked up and down as the estate manager of the whole thing. Kept on moving, all mine, that's a nice bed, it's mine.

There's a beautiful mountain, we'll do for a good flock of sheep up there, all his. And he walked round with the nobility of one who possessed the land. It was in his soul, it wasn't in his hand.

And you know it's much more important to have it in your soul than in your hand. He got the joy of possessing it, even though the fulfillment hadn't come. In fact, it was almost immaterial to him.

It would come. As he got older and he found it wasn't coming, he said, well that's all right, maybe I didn't get quite the promise right, maybe it's going to come in heaven. That's what Hebrews 11 says.

He dwelt in tents all that time, not willing to start building a house because he wasn't going to buy land. Why should he spend money on what was already his? And he went on to say he looked for a city that had foundation, whose maker is God. And although the promise was never fulfilled to him in actual fact, he got all the joy of it, and he's not going to be put to shame.

That promise is going to be fulfilled in a bigger way than ever Abraham thought. Why must we limit everything to this life? We've really got to take heaven seriously. God's promise is much bigger than ours, and so it is with us.

Please turn the cassette over now, do not fast wind it in either direction. We've really got to take heaven seriously. God's promise is much bigger than ours, and so it is with us.

There's a difference between receiving the promise and receiving its fulfillment. The important thing is to receive the promise, to act on it, make choices on the basis of it, get into the joy of it. The actual fulfillment may not be yet, but faith takes promises that is as good as that.

It doesn't let fears of the future darken it round in the present. When I get old how am I going to be provided for? Am I going to have something provided for my old age? What sort of pension will I get? Will I be able to manage on it? It varies, it's got everything in Jesus Christ. In any case, you don't need that just yet.

You haven't got to retire yet. But you have the joy of a complete assurance, everything provided for now. Fear needn't darken our brow if we walk by faith.

And if when the time comes, pension or the provision isn't as big as you'd hope, that doesn't bother the man of faith a bit. Well, of course, I know when I'm going to get my fat pension, that's when I get to glory.

I'm going to have a real freehold house there.

You see, he's in the good and wealth of it. He's lifted the cup, I say, out of the realm of earthly. And he gets the thrill of it, the joy of it.

And I tell you, God never disappoints that man. I've been young, says David, and now I'm old. Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor is seen begging bread, that's putting it at the bare minimum.

Oh, God does much more than the minimum. And the full maximum won't be ours, until we're in that wonderful house of ours, that mansion, with that limitless bank balance in glory. We really must.

I must. I'm preaching this to myself because we're all earthly minded, aren't we? But faith lifts us into that other realm. And we seem to hope for as already something, and get the joy and guilt of it all.

Why should I charge my soul with care? The gold in every mind belongs to Christ, God's Son and Heir, and he's a friend of mine. That's a hymn. If you want to sing it, it's in golden bells.

Why should I charge my soul with care? The gold in every mind belongs to Christ, God's Son and Heir, and he's a friend of mine. Yes, he's a friend of mine, and he with me doth all things share. Since I am Christ and he is mine, why should I have a care? For Jesus is a friend of mine.

There's a wonderful verse, and when he comes in conquering grit, conquering train, to leave the something grand arrayed, it will be glory just to say that he's a friend of mine. You know, you're ready to pop your chest out. Well, well, well, this is living in faith.

But you know, you never see these things in their true colors until you see the contrast. And this chapter is so helpful because it does give us the story of the man who didn't choose not to choose. The story of Lot.

What a story. What deep, deep lessons and warnings for him. How different was the choice he made, how different was the course he took, and how drastically different was the end of this man.

And yet, to begin with, how much the same. You would never have guessed that he wasn't in the same place of faith as Abraham at one time. He talked the language, he could lead in prayer like Abraham could, he could talk about brokenness, being in the light, thought out all the phrases, how easy it is just to pick them up from other people.

But oh, how different after a certain point. And why was that? Well, first of all, I think there were two reasons. First, he hadn't got a real first-hand knowledge of Jehovah.

Abraham was following Jehovah, but Lot was following Abraham. And maybe you feel you've got to conform and talk like other people talk. I beg you, don't.

There's no pressure brought on anybody to use certain phrases and things and fall into line for its own sake. Dare not to conform until you have a personal, first-hand revelation of the Lord. And then you'll find you are one with others who have a personal, first-hand revelation of the Lord.

And you know, the crap will appear. It's deep down. It's not the Lord we're following, it's other people.

But there was another reason, hidden, and I make this inference, I think it's correct. I believe Lot, early, tired of pilgrim life. He early tired of living in a tent.

He early tired of being different from all the other Canaanites. He saw the social amenities of living in the city, the houses of that foundation. I guess some of the folks yesterday who were living in tents cast envious eyes at those who were living in the school.

I hope they repented. Because otherwise they would have had a very miserable day full of self-pity. And may I say, dear friend, it's never too late to repent.

You'll repent today of what went wrong yesterday. But we're sympathetic. It's easy for us to say we had a fine day yesterday when we were living here.

And can't you see how Lot tired of this sort of life? And he was always on the move, always on the move, not really belonging, always different. And I believe he longed to be quit of it. And there's many a person who's conforming, saying the same things that mum and dad do, talking the lingo.

But deep down you're tired of pilgrim life. You find it a cross to be separate from the world. There are some young people who give anything not to have a parson for their father, because they're mocked.

And you know when the time comes, choices are made that show all along they weren't willing to tempt life with Jesus in separation from the world. My friend, the end is drastic. I can prophesy nothing but trouble and doom for anyone who fails to take the higher path of walking by faith with Jesus.

It's that, or absolutely nothing, as is seen by this man. Look at the stages of his career and his choice. The first is in verse 10.

Lot lifted up his eyes, and he made his choice, as I said, purely on the ground of personal advantage, and he judged personal advantage by the seeing of the eye. And we can make choices with no higher motive than merely personal. But people whom God's called, for whom he's got a glorious purpose.

And we sink down to this low level. Young people, if you've found Jesus Christ, you are called, and whether you like it or not, you're committed, if you only knew it, to something glorious. Maybe you wish he hadn't called you such a glorious gift.

And yet, in spite of that fact, we may make choices purely on the ground of personal advantage, and that by the seeing of the eye. Secondly, you can see what went on in his heart also in verse 10. We read there, he beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt.

So often, I mean invariably, every time they did, the garden of the Lord is not like the land of Egypt. The garden of the Lord and the land of Egypt are widely different. You've got to choose between one or the other.

The garden of the Lord or the land of Egypt. If you choose the land of Egypt, it's not the garden of the Lord. But somehow, Lot began to persuade himself that here was at least one path where the two seem to coincide.

You see, he says, it was as the garden of the Lord, but fortunately, it was like the land of Egypt. He'd had a taste of Egypt, he'd rather liked it. And the two, he persuaded himself, coincided.

Now this is where you can make solemn, serious mistakes, and I can. You know you can't have both, but we can see a course of action which, fortunately, the two paths seem to coincide. You can have all the

worldly advantage you want, and yet you can still be a Christian.

But it's only apparent. And maybe it's a rationalization on our part. We talk how it's going to be so helpful, etc., but the real thing is it's like the land of Egypt.

It's not like the garden of the Lord. But we can kid ourselves that the course of action is of that order. And that's what Lot did.

Just right. It wasn't going to be a backslider. He says to follow the Lord, but here you can still be a Christian, and yet here's the land of Egypt too, all thrown in.

No need to be very separate, popular, well-liked, in with everything, and yet still a Christian. I've never heard of that as a possibility, but we can imagine it is. And then in the next verse, we see the next step.

Then Lot chose him over the plain of Jordan, and Lot separated. They separated themselves one from the other, and verse 12, whereas Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. Now Sodom, it goes on to say, they were great sinners.

I'm quite sure he assured Abraham before he set out, no, no, no, I wouldn't dream of touching those cities. Terrible things go on there. Well, why did he pitch his tent toward it? Oh, well, I'm not going to go live there, but they have got a very nice supermarket in there.

It was awfully convenient to run in and get our supplies, and he wanted all the amenities of Sodom. Though he persuaded himself, and perhaps at that point he was quite sincere, he wasn't going to go any further. But all the danger of pitching our tent toward Sodom.

We're quite sure we're not going to go away from the Lord, but we don't want to be too far from the world's favours and its popularity. We don't want to be too distinctive. We ought to have some advantages of popularity with the world, some advantages of what the world can give us.

We're pitching toward Sodom. Maybe that's just as far as it's gone so far with you. May God help us to see it, and show us where, in what particulars, you and I are pitching toward Sodom.

And then we see, it goes further, chapter 14, verse 12. And this is brought out almost incidentally. Verse 12, these are the enemies of Sodom.

They attack Sodom, take multitudes of them captive, and they took Lot, Abraham's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. It's happened. Well, it was a bit too far, you know, and so much more convenient to rent a nice house with foundations, and he's given up tent life.

He's rarely conformed. He's in Sodom. Though, of course, it's quite true he didn't do all they did.

He never did. He never partook of those sins for which Sodom has become infamous. But he was identified with them.

And we will see later that he just couldn't raise a protest. When he did tell the people that the Lord was going to destroy that city, he was unto them as one that mocked. That's in a later chapter.

Doesn't he mock them? No. He's kidding us. And he lost his testimony.

They just wouldn't take him seriously. When he tried to bear witness, because he'd become so much identified with them. And when we become identified with the world, right, cheap, fragile, with them, you may not do the bad things that they do, but you're so identified with them that you've lost your testimony.

If you start talking about Jesus, they say he's kidding. Now listen, they may kid you, the world should never be able to say we're kidding them when we talk about Christ. One thing a Christian may always expect, that they'll take his testimony seriously.

They won't think we're making it up, laying it on for an occasion. But if you and I have departed from the path of faith and walking with Jesus and got identified with the world, if you do try and say something, they won't take it seriously. You'll be unto them as one that mocked.

But worse, because he was in Sodom, he got overthrown with the calamity that fell upon Sodom. And many calamities fall upon the world, which if the Christian is walking in separation, won't come on him. But I tell you, if you're with them, they'll fall on you as well as with the world.

A dear friend of mine years ago suffered a tremendous loss of money. He was a businessman. And I suppose you must remember there was a great boom in certain securities, certain firms, and everybody was getting in and buying the stocks and then selling them a month or two later at handsome profit.

It was going up, up, up. It was a great thing to do. And then one day, the man who was the head of this firm, in an aeroplane, got to the back of the aeroplane, opened the back door and threw himself into the English Channel.

And overnight, those shares crashed and many, many people lost fortune. And a friend of mine, a Christian, did. What was he doing, buying those shares at all? He shouldn't have been in the rat race.

Did he not know that he had in heaven a more enduring substance? But he would get in with the world in one way or another, wishably overthrown in the calamities that fall upon this world. It may not only be this way. Along that line, maybe you're never likely to be investing much money, but there may be other things.

I cannot stay or even think to apply how this may work out in many different ways. And it was Abraham who rescued him. It was a man who was walking in separation, who was the only one who could help the world.

If you put your feet inside a zinc bath, you can never lift it. It's only the man who's outside the zinc bath that can lift it. You say, well, I go to the world to try and help them.

You will do nothing of the sort. The only man to whom the men of the world will turn to is a man who's walking with God, utterly distinct. They know he's got the real thing.

But you, we, I, if we get in with it, they would never come to us. We're no different from them. And it was Abraham who came to the rescue of Sodom, and he only did it because of his nephew, and he rescued Lot.

And you would have thought that Lot would have learned his lesson. He did nothing of the sort. Sodom had got so into his heart that when they reinstated their society, Lot was back again in Sodom, and even more.

In chapter 19, verse 1, we read, Lot sat in the gate of Sodom. And that was a place of judgment, that was a place of rule. And Lot, if you please, is not only in Sodom, he's one of their magistrates.

Probably he thought he could try and clean up Sodom. We have not got to be moral, sanitary inspectors of the world. The influence of the Christian is as salt that prevents the corruption of the world, but we've got to be salt.

And salt is a taste which is distinctive. But the salt can lose its savor, and it is no longer distinctive, and it has no power to prevent corruption. The way in which the Christians affect the world is by their very distinctiveness, the salt.

You never help the world by going in and becoming part of their life and identified with their ways, but here he is in the gate. And you know, but for the grace of God, Lot would have perished in the fire in Brimstone. His wife did, and he got away with his two daughters, but he left his wife petrified by this molten lava, lost or as good.

What a tragic story. And yet they began so close together. They aimed the same conferences.

They were brought up in the same family. It appeared they shared the same taste, but there were weaknesses at the beginning. And maybe it hasn't gone too far, but let's see the beginning.

A. Mine is not a real first-hand experience of the cross. I have not really been broken and rarely faced sin and found peace and release in Jesus. And secondly, deep down I've never become reconciled to any real degree of separation.

I've always hated it. Start there, or maybe it's got a little further. You've begun to choose purely on the grounds of personal advantage.

Maybe you're trying to kid yourself the garden of the Lord and the land of Egypt can be reconciled. You can do both. Maybe you've begun to pitch your tent towards Sodom, or in it, or even trying to be someone in the gate of it.

What a solemn contrast. And my last word is this. Abraham near and near slipped into the same error as Lot did.

This man nearly crashed. Of course, we are just told how he made a right choice later on, but we must think. He was human, and if I'd been in Abraham's position, ah, my, naturally I would have perhaps taken the wrong choice, and I think naturally Abraham would have done.

After he came back at the end of the next chapter from rescuing the inhabitants of Sodom and Lot, verse 17, the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return to the slaughter of the enemies. He'd done a favour to Sodom. He'd done a favour to Sodom.

He'd saved them in the hour of need, and the king of Sodom was grateful. And do you know what he said? Give me the person and take the goods to yourself. Abraham recovered all that the enemy had taken for a multitude of wonderful garments, wedges of gold and silver.

And this king said, you've done so much. It's enough that you've saved our lives. The least we can do is to let you take the spoil for yourself.

It seemed so right. He wasn't taking it, it was a gift, and he could well do with it. After all, they were obligated to him.

It seemed reasonable. What a chance. If he'd taken those goods, he would thereafter have been obligated to this filthy city.

And that might have led to something else, and to something else. And the same slipping away could have taken place in Abraham's life as happened in Lot's. Listen, it's very good for the world to be obligated to him.

Let them be obligated to him. The Christian is sometimes the only one who can help in certain situations. But don't let us be obligated to the world.

And you know, Abraham would have done it, but for the fact, at exactly the right time, there appeared a strange man. We don't know where he came from or where he went to. He is called Melchizedek, king of Salem.

And just before this offer was made to Abraham, to which he might have succumbed, Melchizedek came. In that pagan society, here was the priest, a priest of the Most High God, who had a pure knowledge of God, and he knew the great purpose that God had for Abraham. And he said, Blessed be thou by God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth.

And in Old Testament times, blessing meant material blessing. Abraham, the God's chosen man, he's got all the blessings that the God of heaven can give you. And once again, Abraham was enabled to walk by faith.

There wasn't all that possessions, but there was a promise, renewed in him. And Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine, and they feasted together. And in the light of that, the king of Sodom's offer seemed absolutely tawdry.

What did he want with that stuff? And oh, what noble words he said. I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord the Most High God, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread, even to a shoe latchet. But I will not take anything that is thine, lest you should say, I've made Abraham rich.

If riches come to me, it's going to be from God. But listen, if Abraham took that step, no thanks to Abraham, there was grace again. Just when he needed him most, God gave a visitation of this strange being.

And the New Testament tells us that Melchizedek is a type and foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus. And just when you're in peril, just when perhaps you're getting a bit popular, and begin to recognize your worth, and they would like to shower their favors on you so that really they could perhaps silence your testimony, Jesus comes. There isn't a man who would have kept faithful.

I don't care who it is, not one of us, had Jesus not come. Just when I need him most, just when I need him most, Jesus is near to comfort and cheer, just when I need him, just when he knew the world was going to make me its favorite, he came. And he lifted up my eyes to things unseen.

He renewed those gracious promises. And I caught a vision again, in the light of which, what the world had to offer was utterly insignificant. And so to us, if we'd been kept faithful, no thanks to us.

We would have succumbed to all the subtleties of the world, the flesh and the devil, had not our Melchizedek come, had not the King of Salem visited us before the King of Salem. And so he made that further great renunciation, once again by faith. And oh, it's so touching, in the next chapter, when he's made again that big surrender, Jehovah appears to him, says, fear not Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.

I am the one by whom you won that victory, it wasn't you. And listen, I'm not only the shield by whom you won it, but I am your exceeding great reward. You have lost nothing by turning down the office of Solomon.

So he went on, still the pilgrim, still living by faith, still saying, why should I charge my soul with care? The gold in every mind belongs to Christ, God's Son and Heir, and I'm a friend of mine. What a story it is. Well, which path are we treading? Lot's path or Abraham's path? And Lot's path begins on subtle things, but even Abraham's have their temptations, how subtle it all is.

But praise God for our Melchizedek, who knows how to appear to us and reveal himself and reveal the glorious things we have in him. And we turn our eyes upon Jesus, we look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace. Now, none of us are immune from what we've been saying.

I'm not immune, you're not. We're all in this together. God help us to see Melchizedek, to see the King of Salem, the King of Peace, Jesus.

To see that he's offering me, renewing to me that which is so much better. God help us to see the terrible peril of casting away our confidence, our faith in him, which, as Paul says, has great reckoning of reward. You've got to keep your eye on that.

And it doesn't matter if it doesn't seem to be working out. Faith doesn't have to see it work out. Faith lives and is happy in the unseen, confident that he who has promised is able also to perform it.

And even now, quite apart from fulfillment, we're in the good of it. We're in the assurance of it. We're in the joy.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18716.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/roy-hession/abraham-the-life-of-faith-part-3/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net