

# (Genesis) - Part 18

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the dangers of double-mindedness and the importance of prioritizing our relationship with God over earthly attachments, as illustrated through the story of Lot and his family in Genesis 19.*

**Duration:** 59:07

**Scripture:** Genesis 19:14, Genesis 19:19, Matthew 6:33, Luke 17:30-31

**Topics:** "Genesis"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of responding quickly to God's call, using the examples of Peter and Matthew who immediately left their jobs to follow Jesus. The speaker warns against the weakness of our flesh and the danger of becoming prideful in our spiritual experiences. The sermon then transitions to a study of Genesis 19, focusing on the story of Lot and God's mercy towards him despite his compromising lifestyle. Lot warns his sons-in-law about the impending destruction of Sodom, but they do not take him seriously due to his materialistic pursuits.

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## Transcript

Let's turn to Genesis, Chapter 19. In our last study, we finished at verse 14, where the angels, the two angels had come to Sodom, to Lot's house, and urged him to leave the house, to leave the city immediately, because God was going to destroy the place. Then we see God's mercy towards that man, Lot, even though he was such a compromiser.

And as we go further down, we will see why God delivered Lot. It's very interesting when we come to that verse to see it. Before that, verse 14, we read that when Lot went out and spoke to his son's-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, Get out of this place, for the Lord will destroy the city, he appeared to his son's-in-law to be jesting or joking.

His son's-in-law didn't take what he said seriously, because he was so much interested in making money and his son's-in-law had seen that. And that teaches us that if others around us see that we are basically interested in this world just like them, however much we may witness to them, it has no effect on them, because they see that we are anxious like they are anxious, we are pursuing money like they are pursuing money, then there is no difference. It is our life that makes our testimony effective.

And I have also thought of this, that when it says he appeared to his son's-in-law to be jesting, there are some people who are always joking. You get honor by being one who cracks jokes, and particularly with unbelievers, you can get a lot of honor as a humorous person. And after you have won that honor with an unbeliever as a very humorous, sociable person, just try witnessing to that unbeliever about the reality of eternal things, and that unbeliever will think that is another one of your jokes.

It's a serious thing to be a jester with those who are not really born again and those who are going on their way to an eternal hell. We have to be very careful that our testimony is not nullified by our lust to get a reputation as a joker or a humorous person. And when morning dawned, verse fifteen, the angels urged Lot, saying, Up, take your wife and your two daughters, and who are here, lest you be swept away from the punishment of the city.

Now this is, they're repeating. It's almost as though Lot doesn't want to go. They urge him.

And it says again in verse sixteen, he hesitated. Here was a double-minded man who, even after he heard the word of God, which said that God's going to judge the city, was still lingering. His heart was so much in all that he had accumulated and all that he had earned, and he was thinking that he had to leave all that behind, and he hesitated.

There's no other reason why he hesitated. He hesitated because he was a double-minded man. And the word of God warns us about being double-minded, which means to have one mind.

The word of God says, Set your mind on the things which are above and not on the things on the earth. You can have your mind set on the things above, or you can have your mind set on the things of earth, according to Colossians, chapter three, verse two and three. Or we can try and have our mind set in both places, above and below.

Then we are double-minded. And then, when God calls us to something, there can be a hesitation, because I am so attached to something. And a true disciple is one who is not attached to anything.

One thing we see about the apostles whom Jesus chose was, in every recorded instance of his calling one of those twelve apostles, we read that when Jesus called them, they immediately dropped everything and followed him. Now, that sounds very simple, but just think of this. Supposing tonight the Lord were to tell you to resign your job tomorrow morning when you go to the office, and come and serve me full-time.

Would you respond as quickly as Peter and Matthew? You really got to appreciate them. There were other people whom the Lord called, and one man said, I've got to wait till my father dies, and another person said, I've got something else to do. And they never got a chance to be the apostles.

They could have been, but the ones who became apostles were the ones who responded immediately. And that's really something that we need to ask ourselves, particularly where it involves something of the earth. You see, we can have despised full-time workers so much because of so many people who have abused it and done so many wrong things in the name of Christian work.

But the question is whether we ourselves would be willing to give up a job like that, like those apostles did. That's a very big question. Or would there be the same double-mindedness, double-mindedness because my family can't have all those comforts that I'm used to, and I can't get a regular salary every month like I'm getting.

These are the type of hesitation that Lot had. And very often, much more than we realize, our mind is very much attached to our monthly salary and comforts and so many things. And that is the thing that hinders us from really responding to the call of God to something higher.

A true disciple is one who is not attached to anything on the earth. Many have missed God's best because there's something they're not willing to give up. Something.

Maybe their job, maybe some possession, something. But there's something which if God called them to give up, they will not give up. And God says, okay.

He won't force us. But I really believe that's something every one of us need to ask ourselves, that which gives us security on the earth. I mention a job because that is the thing which gives us maximum earthly security.

And therefore, I believe for many of us, our job can be the hindrance for our following the Lord. Because we find our security not in God, but in our job and in our salary. And the Lord may say, are you willing to give that up and trust me? And I may say, no.

He doesn't force. Lot hesitated. So before we judge Lot, it's good to judge ourselves and see whether we would hesitate in a similar situation.

Because for him it was insecurity, leaving everything. He was going to leave his job, he was going to leave his bank account, he's going to leave everything and go out to someplace God is calling him. And that hesitation.

And everyone who is honest can understand that hesitation. They find, who find their security in earthly things. And the man seized his hand, it was serious, and grabbed him.

The compassion of the Lord was upon him. It is the compassion of God that was strict with Lot and grabbed him and took him out of that city and said, come out. It's the compassion of the Lord that is strict with us and that brings us out of things that would damage us and put him outside the city.

And it came about that when they had brought them outside, that one said, escape for your life. Here was another word of God. Escape for your life.

Do not look behind you. And do not stay anywhere in the valley. Escape to the mountain, lest you be swept away.

Now, why would they look behind? There could be two reasons. One, it could be that they look back in sadness at all that they had to leave their nice house and all the things connected to the house and their possessions. They had to leave all that now and go.

That was one thing, that they could look back. And the other is that they could look back out of curiosity to see what is actually God doing there. There are two areas where we can face danger here.

One is this looking back to something that we have left or given up for the Lord and we see somebody else who has not given up those things for the Lord and his life is so much more comfortable and easier. And we look back and think oh, I've given that up, but this other brother he hasn't and he seems to have an easier time. That's the looking back.

Or it can be curiosity to look into something which God doesn't want us to look into. We read in the Old Testament of one town in Israel where when the ark was lodged there, people went and peeped inside to see what was inside the ark. And it says God judged thousands of them because they looked inside what they were not supposed to look into.

Curiosity. You have to take God's word seriously. But Lord said to them, Oh no, my Lord, and here is the expression of unbelief and disobedience.

Behold, your servant, verse 19, has found favor in your sight and you have magnified your lovingkindness, which you have shown me by saving my life. But I cannot escape to the mountains lest the disaster overtake me and I die. I cannot escape to the mountains.

God spoke to him through those angels, Go to the mountains. And here is unbelief saying, No, but by the time I reach the mountains, the judgment may come. Please.

As though God would take him out of the city and then judge him outside the city. And it's possible for a person to think that, that God saved him from destruction. It's like someone who says, I'll carry you across the river and halfway across the river, he just dumps you and says, I've had enough of you.

There are people who think that God will do that to them, save them from hell and judgment and halfway through life, say to them, I'm fed up with you. I'm just going to dump you in the middle of the river. That's the unbelief.

And again, it's good to judge ourselves instead of judging lots to see whether there is that same unbelief, that feeling that God will let me down or he will let some calamity overtake me. That's lot's fear. Some disaster will overtake me.

Do you have that fear? That God who saved you from hell may not save you from some disaster that may come upon you or your children or that can be a fear. Yeah, he saved me from hell. That's right.

But some disaster may still overtake me. This fear, some disaster may overtake me. Yeah, there we can learn something from lot's unbelief.

Let the disaster overtake me. He says, please protect me in this town. This town, which was later named Zohar, was also to be punished, but God spared it because lot said, OK, Lord, please let me go to this town.

It's a small one. Doesn't matter if it's not judged. Please let me escape there.

Isn't it small that my life may be saved? Lot knew that that small town was also to be judged by fire and brimstone because it was part of the cities comprising Sodom and Gomorrah. But he asked God to spare it. For my sake, please let me stay here, even though these fellows also deserve judgment.

And there we see the fantastic grace of God. All right, he said, I grant you this request also not to overthrow the town of which you have spoken. And so God did not overthrow that town, even though they were sexual perverts and people who deserve judgment.

Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there. Therefore, the name of the town was called Zohar. The sun had risen over the earth when lot came to Zohar and the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven.

Notice that word then in verse 24, meaning that God waited until Lot was well clear before that judgment came. Tremendous mercy of God. And he overthrew those cities and all the inhabitants of the cities and what grew on the ground.

When Jesus said that the last days would be like the days of Noah and Lot, the one thing he mentioned there was that Noah was put into the ark and the judgment came suddenly. And Lot was taken out of Sodom and the judgment came suddenly. And it will be something like that in the day when Jesus comes.

Some will be taken out and suddenly the judgment will come on a world that is not expecting it. But his wife from behind him. Just by the way, verse 25, these cities in the valley which was overthrown lies at the bottom of what is today known as the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea is the lowest place below sea level on the face of the earth. And even today the water in that sea is so saturated with salt that it's very difficult to drown in it because the water is so dense. And that is where Sodom and Gomorrah was judged more than 3,500 years ago.

And his wife from behind him looked back. And one can think of all that was in her mind when she looked back. Jesus said if anyone puts his hand to the plow and looks back, he is not fit for the kingdom of God.

Or as the Living Bible says, the one who allows himself to be distracted from the work that I plan for him is not fit for God's kingdom. God has planned a work for us. And if I allow myself to be distracted from that, that will of God for my life, I allow myself to be distracted from God's will for my life because I seek some earthly comfort, or some prosperity, or somebody's honor, or some money, or something that allows me to be distracted from that perfect plan that God has for my life, then I'm following in the footsteps of lost wives who put their hand to the plow and then look back.

Lost wife were not like lost sons-in-law. The sons-in-law never even put their hand to the plow. They never came out.

This is a picture of those who come out, and then they are so double-minded that they look back. We have to say to Lot's credit that though he was double-minded in the beginning and hesitated, once God told him not to look back, he didn't look back. But his wife turned around.

Now it's very interesting to see what Jesus said about this in Luke chapter 17 and verse 32 onward, because this has relevance for us in the times in which we live, because we are living in those days which Jesus referred to as the days of Noah and the days of Lot, days of tremendous violence and sexual perversity. And this connection Jesus says, in that day, verse 30, Luke 17, verse 30 onward, in that day when the Son of Man is revealed, speaking about the day when Jesus will be revealed from heaven, in the previous verse 29, on the day that Lot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all, on that day when the Son of Man is revealed, verse 31, let not the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house, or we can say, whose possession, he has not become a disciple. He has not given up his possession.

His possession, his treasure, is not in heaven. His treasure is inside his house. Let him not go down to take it away.

And the one who is in the field, let him not have to turn back. Remember, Lot's wife. It's in this connection, he said, that your goods are in the house.

Lot's wife's goods were in her house. And she looked back. He says, in the day when the Lord's revealed, if your heart is attached to something on this earth, I believe the meaning of that is, God will say, all right, you stay with that, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also, and there will your body be also in the day of the rapture.

And if your treasure is in heaven and your heart is there, then your body will also go there in the day of the rapture. But if your treasure is on earth and your heart is there, then your body will be here in the day of the rapture. I mean, that's only righteous of God to do that.

And there is where the first will be last and the last will be first, that many people who appear to be so spiritual, God who examines everybody's heart, will have to leave some people's bodies behind because their hearts are here. He doesn't want to separate their bodies from their hearts. Their heart is here and says, let the body be with the heart.

And so in that connection, he says, remember Lot's wife, in that night, verse 34. And the word here is not two men. As you read in the King James Version, there'll be two people in one bed.

That must be a husband and wife. Lot and his wife. One is taken and the other is left behind.

Lot had to leave his wife behind and he had to go on. And Jesus said, in the day that the Son of Man is revealed, the wife will wake up and discover that her husband is missing. And then she can remember Lot's wife and understand why she got left behind.

Or it can be the other way. The husband will wake up and discover that his wife is missing. And then he can remember Lot's wife and understand why he got left behind.

There's no partiality with God. There'll be two people grinding in the mill or working in an office, we can say, two believers, professing believers anyway. And one's taken because his heart's been there.

God says, I unite your body with your heart. And to the other person also, he says, I unite your body with your heart. Your heart's here, your body's here.

That's a very serious warning. Remember Lot's wife. Jesus himself said that.

And in this, at the end of that chapter, in Luke chapter 17, we find this verse. It's very difficult to interpret. But we can see it in this connection.

Luke 17, the last verse. Because they asked him, where, Lord? Where, where is all this, where are all these people going to go and be left behind? And then Jesus said, where the body is, the vultures will be gathered. Where there's a dead body, the vultures are drawn to it.

So Jesus was speaking there about a principle of being drawn to something that attracts you. Like the vulture is drawn to the dead body, because its nature is like that. It loves that dead body.

Those whose goods are in the house, they'll be drawn to that, and they'll be left behind. And those whose hearts are set on things above, they'll be drawn to that which their nature draws them to, and they'll be taken up. So that's a serious warning.

And I believe when the day when Jesus comes, we will see that it is exactly fulfilled like that. That no one can fool God, that if our hearts have set on, have been set on the things above, God has seen it, and he

will unite our body with our heart. And if our heart was set on the things beneath, however pious and religious we may have appeared before others, God will see to it that our body remains where our heart is.

And Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the Lord. And there we see Abraham's concern. He wanted to see, are there ten righteous men in Sodom? I prayed God would spare that city if there were ten righteous men.

He prayed and he wanted to see the answer to his prayers. There was a man of faith, always the mark of faith, that when we pray for something, we expect the answer. We get up in the morning to find out whether the answer has come.

And that's what Abraham got up in the morning, went and stood before the Lord, and he looked to see whether his prayer was answered. And when he saw Sodom and Gomorrah burning, he knew that there were not ten righteous men in that. And he saw, behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace.

Thus it came about that when God destroyed the cities of the valley. Now, this is the verse I was referring to at the beginning. God remembered not Lot.

Did you notice that? God remembered Abraham and delivered his nephew Lot. It's quite a contrast to Genesis chapter 8, verse 1, which we considered. There we read God remembered Noah and delivered him from that flood.

But here, it doesn't say God remembered Lot. He was pretty ashamed of Lot, this compromiser who was dishonoring his name in Sodom and Gomorrah, making his name a laughing stock by living for the world and trying to preach the gospel. It's like some people who are not upright in their jobs, and they go around giving tracts or wearing badges.

But they are not straightforward in their jobs. People see that they love money, that they live for the earth. If you are like that, brother, better you don't wear a badge, better you don't give out any tracts, at least don't dishonor the Lord's name.

Let them think that you are just another unbeliever, rather than, if you do give out tracts and make it known that you are a Christian, make sure that your testimony is way beyond reproach, absolutely 100% clear. Wherever your testimony is not 100% clear, the best thing you can do for the Lord is not let anybody know you are a Christian. Let them think you are a Hindu or a Muslim or an atheist or something.

Better they don't think you are a Christian. If your testimony is not absolutely upright and clear in your office and neighborhood, it's far better they think you are an atheist or a Hindu or a Muslim, rather than that the name of Jesus Christ is dishonored. When they see your behavior and your conduct and the way you do things, and then you give out tracts and you preach to them.

No, God was ashamed of lots, but he remembered Abraham. And for Abraham's sake, he blessed his nephews. Amazing how God blesses our family members, because he sees one upright man.

I've seen that many a time, that because of a very upright, godly father, the children who don't deserve God's blessing because they are such compromisers, still somehow get a few trickles of blessing because of a very godly father or mother. Sometimes even a nephew gets blessed. Think of that.

That God can remember you and bless one of your nephews because he sees the goodness and the uprightness and the righteousness of your life. It's absolutely fantastic what God will do for other people who are in some way related to a godly man. That we learn from the Old Testament.

God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, and he overthrew the cities in which Lot lived. And Lot went up from Zoar. Finally he had to leave Zoar.

See, first he didn't want to go to the mountains, but I think he discovered that the people in Zoar were just as wicked and evil and sexually perverted and violent like the ones in Sodom, and he had to get out. And finally he had to come to the place where God told him to go in the first place. He went up to the mountain because he was afraid, it says, verse 30, to stay in Zoar.

He saw the wickedness and he thought, boy, God will judge this place too. And now this man who was the millionaire of his time is now a pauper, staying in a cave, no house, no place to lay his head. The man who sought after riches, the man who sought after this world, ends up as a pauper, lost his wife, lost his son's-in-law, I don't know who else of his relatives he lost, and then left with his two daughters.

And then we read the horrible thing that those two daughters did in verse 31 to 38, how they had children through their father, and we see how the influence of Sodom came upon their daughters. The influence of Sodom had affected his daughters, and that's something which many people don't realize, that when they go seeking for money in the world, it affects their children so much. They lose their children and daughters and sons in more ways than one.

If only people would realize. The influence of Sodom had made these daughters also so sexually perverted in their minds, and so crazy after marriage and having children. That was their craze.

We must get married and have children. If God gives it, that's all right, but to have such a lust for it, that even if God doesn't give it, I must get it one way or the other, is really opening the door to all types of sin. There are people like that, who when they couldn't find a believer, just choose anyone, because they are so crazy after getting married and having children.

That's what these women were. These two women were crazy after getting married and having children. And we got to take a warning from there, from the evil conducts of these two women, and they had children called Ammon and Moab, as we read in verse 37 and 38, who are the father of the Ammonites and the Moabites.

Later on we read of, we read in the book of Deuteronomy, that God said that not a single Moabite or Ammonite must ever enter into the congregation of the Lord after the tenth generation or something like that. It was a severe judgment. And we see here that that's the last we hear of Lot.

We never hear of Lot again. Think of what a different ending his would have been if he had walked the God-fearing way that his uncle Abraham had walked. And this is a warning for all those who have the influence of some God-fearing person near them, and who take it lightly, despise it.

Jesus said that even a prophet is usually despised by his relatives, and those in his own house, only outside he has honor. Abraham was probably despised by Lot, but later on he would have realized what he had missed. The influence of a godly man, never despise it.

And don't despise it just because he's your relative. Maybe God blesses you in some way because of that man, because you're related to him. If only Lot had realized that.

But think of the sad ending, that the last thing you hear about Lot is this horrible evil that he gets into after getting drunk. Yeah, a tremendous warning for those who have ears to hear. Chapter 20, verse 1, Abraham journeyed from there, and Abraham said of Sarah, his wife, Genesis 22, she is my sister.

You see, this is the same mistake he made once before. We read that in Genesis 12, where he told Pharaoh, this is my sister. And he got into a little trouble there when Pharaoh discovered it was not his sister, but his wife.

But he doesn't seem to have learned that lesson. And he says a second time, for the same reason. He's probably afraid of his wife, Abimelech.

This is another king. Abimelech was probably the title of the king of this area, just like Pharaoh is the title of the king of Egypt. And so Abimelech took Sarah, saying, oh, well, if it's your sister, I'd like to marry her.

But God came to Abimelech that night and said, you're a dead man, and God warned him. But notice something here. The absolute honesty of the word of God.

It's very difficult to find a biography of a great man of God written today, which is honest, like scripture. You read about Noah in scripture, great, mighty man of God, but it tells you that he also got drunk one day and lay naked. Great man of God Abraham was called the father of us all in Romans chapter four, and it tells us how he did so many wrong things, tells us about the lie that Isaac said, Jacob, and the failure of Moses, how he lost his temper, and how Paul shouted at the high priest, and Paul had a disagreement with Barnabas, and they separated.

Peter denied the Lord. You look through the biographies of all these great men in the scripture, and you find that the scripture is absolutely honest. And that teaches us what the inspiration of the Holy Spirit leads us to.

There is a tendency to hero worship in our flesh, and I've seen that among Christians. I've seen it in every single group of Christians that I've ever come across on the face of the earth, from the worst to the best, that when they have some great respect for a particular man of God, they become one hundred percent blind to anything wrong that that man can ever say or do or teach. That man is like the Roman Catholic infallible Pope.

Not only infallible Pope, he's perfect. And then we know that such people have got a wrong idea. They're not led by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit gives us eyes that are wide open. Luke, who was the apostle Paul's close co-worker, was willing to write about Paul's weaknesses. Think of that.

And Paul would have been very happy that Luke wrote it so that people don't think of him more highly than they ought to think. Think if you were delighted that when a close co-worker was saying something about you, he said some of your bad points too. Praise God, I'm glad he said that so that those chaps don't get a wrong idea about me.

It's not easy to have that reaction, because we love to be here or worship ourselves. And we don't want anybody to say anything wrong about us. That's part of our carnality.

But the word of God is so absolutely downright honest. Jesus said that men will come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. He spoke about Abraham.

God calls himself the God of Abraham. But this here's a fellow telling a lie concerning his wife. Honest.

It is honesty that God appreciates more than flawlessness. Flawlessness means without a single mistake in my life. And I'm just being dishonest, trying to give people the impression that I never made a mistake and never make a mistake.

That dishonesty, God detests. That's what makes people into Pharisees. But I know this is God's word because it tells me honestly about the failures of God's people, of great men of God.

And I can believe what I hear when somebody tells me about another great man of God. I can believe it only if he tells me one or two of his failures also. Otherwise, I can't believe anything he says.

He may be just bluffing. But when he tells me one or two of failures of that man of God, then I know that this must be the truth, because he's honest enough to see his failures too. Now, if you don't believe that, you try that out.

You go into any group of Christians, whether it's the Methodists, you ask them about Wesley, or the Lutherans, and you ask them about Luther, or the Catholics, you ask them about the Pope, or any group, the best groups, go and ask them about that leader. And invariably, they'll tell you that leader is one who's never made any faults. What a ridiculous idea! So contrary to Scripture.

And there's where we see the soulishness of even some who are otherwise spiritual, that they're not willing to honestly face up and see that in a particular area, so-and-so was wrong. Even though he was very godly, he was wrong. And I just want to encourage you, my brothers and sisters, don't be soulish like that concerning anyone.

Be clear, walk in the light, and be like the Holy Spirit has inspired Scripture to be. Honest and truthful about the greatest men that Scripture writes about. So that's a great encouragement for us, but we can learn something here about Abraham, why Abraham told a lie.

He told a lie because he was afraid of man. The Bible says in Proverbs 29, verse 20, the fear of man brings a snare. That means it's a trap.

Why did he tell a lie when we are caught in a tight spot in the office? Three words. Fear of man. Always.

Invariably, it is fear of man. Why did Abraham tell a lie when he was in a tight spot? Fear of man. It is a trap.

It caught Abraham, it has caught us, and if I don't fear God sufficiently, I will fear man. Then I'll be caught in the trap. And we see here that it's quite interesting to see that this event takes place immediately after some of these fantastic revelations that Abraham has had.

In chapter 17, God came to him and made a covenant with him and gave him the sign of the covenant circumcision, and made fantastic promises. In Genesis 18, God came and sat down and had a meal with

Abraham and spoke to him about Sodom and Gomorrah. After all these tremendous revelations, immediately Abraham falls.

What do we learn from that? We have to be particularly careful after, just after, we have received some mighty experiences with God. If you had some tremendous experience with God, that's the time when you have to be very careful. You don't know what's ahead.

Perhaps a big fall is just waiting for you. Because maybe a certain pride has come into your heart. And like they say in the world, pride goes before a fall.

That a certain pride has come and God has blessed me or given me some revelation, God spoke to me in this personal way. Abraham may have felt that. God has spoken to me and told me about the judgment coming on Sodom.

God has told me I've changed my name. My name is not Abraham anymore, Abraham. And then down, crash.

A warning. Be particularly careful after you have had some new experience with God, some revelations. That's the time you've got to be watchful.

Think of Peter. Jesus said, who am I? Jesus, Peter says, you are Christ, son of the living God. And Jesus says, blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father in heaven.

Think if Jesus was speaking to all of us sitting here. And one of us got up and gave the right answer. And Jesus Christ publicly congratulates you.

So put your name and says, you are really blessed. And you are so fucked up, you feel like putting your collar up because Jesus has congratulated you in the presence of everyone. And the very next thing that Jesus tells Peter is, get behind me, Satan.

He has fallen. The very next time Peter opens his mouth, he's fallen. He says, Lord, don't go to the cross.

At one time he's speaking from God, at the other time he's speaking from the devil. Be particularly careful when you have been publicly congratulated or publicly honored by God, then really something. Yeah, that's something we learn from, you see, we don't realize how weak our flesh is until the moment of temptation.

In the moment when we are having revelations from God and getting fantastic experiences and being blessed by God, we can almost forget that we still have a flesh in which there dwells no good thing. And we can think, oh, I'm really so highly spiritual now, I'm having wonderful experiences with God, and in that moment I forget that I'm still carrying around with me a flesh in which there dwells no good thing. Then I fall.

I must never forget whatever experiences I may have had of God, whatever God has done for me or through me or blessed me or blessed others through me, I must remember, I am still at the end of it all carrying around with me a flesh in which dwells no good thing. And I'll never see the corruption in flesh better than in the moment of temptation. Let the temptation come, and all these experiences and revelations I had yesterday, it's almost as though they're not there.

I suddenly reacted in just a human evil way. And then we see that Abraham was just like us. But God is merciful, because he had a purpose for Abraham and he has a purpose for us.

It says he came to Abimelech in a dream at night and said to him, you are a dead man. Because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married. That teaches us something, that God is able to speak even to earthly rulers on our behalf.

Sometimes you wonder whether God can speak to your boss about some need that you have. Here Abraham had a need. His need was, this fellow has walked off with my wife.

Can God speak to him? Of course God can speak to him, and God did. Maybe you have a need. And you need somebody to speak to your landlord, or your boss, or someone who is above you.

Can God do it? If you live before God like Abraham and not like Lot, you can be sure that God will speak for you. But if you're living like Lot, trying to make money in Sodom, and then suddenly come to God to claim his promises made to Abraham, you find it doesn't work. But if you live like Abraham did, he will even speak to great rulers.

Wake them up in the night or speak to them at night in a dream and say, listen, I want to tell you something about your dealings with this man who has come into your town. Think that God can do that. Have faith, brother and sister, that God can do that.

According to your faith, be it unto you. If I say, Lord, I believe you can do that for me, he'll do it for me. Another person who is timid says, oh, I'm not sure.

It won't happen for such a person, because his problem is not his timidity, it is his unbelief. There are many things God cannot do for his children, because they are so unbelieving. They read that God spoke to rulers on behalf of his children, and they won't believe that God can speak to that petty little boss sitting in an office.

Think of that. And because of their unbelief, God says, all right, I will not speak to him, because you don't believe me. You don't believe I'll do it for you.

Think what a different situation would have happened if you had trusted God and said, Lord, I'm your wholehearted disciple. I desire nothing on this earth except to do your will. And God will even speak to rulers on your behalf.

He'll disturb their sleep at night and speak to them in a dream on your behalf. That's what he did. He said, give back that man's wife to him.

And Abimelech has to do it. He doesn't have to be a believer, by the way. Abimelech was no believer.

He was a godless, probably an idolater. God can speak to idolatrous kings. Sure.

And said, give back that woman and solve his servant's problem. You believe God can solve your problems by speaking to your boss? If you live like Abraham, sure. And Abimelech had not come near her, and he said, Lord, will you slay a nation even though blameless? The Bible says, the king's heart, Proverbs 21.1, is in the hand of the Lord.

God can turn it wherever he wills, the rivers of water. The rivers of water are going east at one time and west at another time. In other words, God can... Have you seen a river in a map? You never find a straight river anywhere in the world.

A river is always meandering, going this way, that way, sometimes east, sometimes west, east, west. That's how it goes. And the word of God says in Proverbs 21.1 that the Lord can turn the king's heart which is set on going east, he can turn it round to make it go west, just like the rivers of water.

Wonderful word. But that's what he did with Abimelech. And Abimelech said, Lord, this man himself said, he's my sister.

And she also said, he's my brother. In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands, I've done this. God said to him, yes, I know that.

Think of those three words. I know that. Think that you can stand before God and say, Lord, in the integrity of my heart, I did that.

I made a mistake, true. But I didn't do it with a bad motive. I did it sincerely, thinking that it was the right thing.

And God can say, I know that. And therefore, I don't judge you. That's a great word of encouragement for those of us who have had the experience of making mistakes, even when our heart was absolutely straightforward and upright, full of integrity.

That we can hear God saying, I know that. And at the same time, those three words, I know that, which is an encouragement to men with men of integrity, is also a tremendous warning for people who try to play the fool with God. For God also says, I know that.

I know why you did it. I know that you were trying some tricks there. I know that.

Three words that can either be an encouragement to us or a threat of judgment, depending on whether our hearts are in integrity or in crookedness. Think that a heathen king could stand to God and say, Lord, in the integrity of my heart, I did it. And God says, I know that.

And he testifies to it, like he testified concerning Job. He was concerning a heathen king, that the integrity of your heart, you did this. Therefore, because I saw the integrity of your heart, I kept you from sinning against me.

Do you believe that God can keep us from sinning? That's not Jude 24. That is Genesis 20, verse 6. Jesus can keep us from falling. God kept Abimelech from sinning, because he saw the integrity of that man's heart.

Why does he allow some people to sin, then? I'll tell you. Because he sees that in their hearts they are not straightforward. I've seen that many times, particularly as we have proclaimed the message of victory over sin.

We've seen many people oppose us, and very often we find that behind all that opposition, they may say it is doctrinal, and this, that, and the other, but behind it all is a lack of integrity of heart. And what is more dangerous are the people who don't oppose us, but sit saying that they believe everything, but are hypocritical in their attitude, in their life. And they sin.

And they sin. And they sin. And they talk about the new and living way, and sin, and sin.

And God can never say, I've kept you from sinning. Think of that phrase, I have kept you from sinning, because I saw the integrity of your heart. Put it another way, I have allowed you to keep on sinning, because I've seen that there's no integrity in your heart.

You are crooked, and that's why you keep on sinning, even though you talk about victory over sin. Take that seriously. That if God sees that there's an integrity in our heart, even if we make a mistake, he will keep us.

Tremendous encouragement to those who want to be free from guile and hypocrisy. I believe with all my heart that in the final day we will see that many believers completely missed God's will, and lost their salvation, only because of one thing, because of guile and hypocrisy in their lives. I believe that will be true even for people who have sat in the church, and quite likely even for some who have come into our midst.

Quite likely, they will miss salvation because of guile and hypocrisy. Whereas some other person was weaker, but because they were honest and upright before God, God lifted them up and kept them. Brothers and sisters, seek after integrity of heart, and hate all guile and hypocrisy.

You know, that's a warning to us from a heathen king. It is sovereignty of God that kept him from sinning, and he says, I didn't even let you touch her. Think of that.

Think of that. That this man wanted to marry Sarah, and took her to his house, and he didn't even touch her. Think of that.

That God's sovereignty could have kept that king so busy that day, that he didn't even have an opportunity to touch Sarah till he went to sleep and got this dream. Think of the amazing sovereignty of God that can do such a thing. Amazing.

Think about that, and see God's sovereignty. Now he says, restore the man's wife. Don't just confess your sin, you have to make restitution.

You have to give back what you have taken wrongfully, for he is a prophet. Think how God defends Abraham. He doesn't say he's a liar.

We would say he's a liar. God says he's a prophet. God is merciful, unlike us.

We can be so hard in judging others. He's a prophet. Yeah, I know he slipped up, but he's a prophet.

There's something in his heart which makes him a man of God. God saw that in Abraham, despite his failure. And that is another encouragement, that God doesn't just look at our failures.

If he sees an integrity in our hearts, he doesn't just concentrate on the failure like men do, focusing their microscope on that. He sees something behind all that. He sees all the sacrifices you've made, all that you've given up.

And he doesn't forget it. He's a prophet, and he will pray for you, and you will live. If he prays for you, you'll live.

You may be a great king in the world, but your life is dependent on that man of God praying for you now. This world doesn't realize how much power a godly man has in heaven. That kings are dependent on him.

Think of that. It's not a joke when we say we pray for the prime minister, the leaders in the country. Their life is dependent on the prayers of godly people.

Not the compromisers and the hypocrites, but the godly people. One godly man can affect the life of a ruler. He will pray for you, and then you'll live.

Think that God can say that, even though the prime minister may not hear it. If that godly person or those godly people pray for you, you'll live. Otherwise, you'll die.

It's there in the Old Testament too. But if you do not restore her, if you don't make restitution, you shall surely die. And all who are yours.

Zimlak arose early in the morning, and he was more wholehearted than a lot of believers when God tells them to make restitution. Give back what you took wrongfully, whether it's somebody's wife or somebody's money or somebody's property or anything. Give it back.

And Zimlak didn't think about it for five years. He arose early next morning and started giving back. That's an example of restitution from a heathen, godless king.

And called all the servants and told all these things, and the men were greatly frightened. And Zimlak called Abraham and said to him, What have you done to us? How have I sinned against you, that you brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? What is he called, adultery? This is before the law. There were no ten commandments those days.

And he didn't even know God. But as a heathen king, he calls adultery a great sin. And there we see the shallowness.

Jesus said that Sodom and Gomorrah would rise up in judgment against some of the cities where he preached. He said Tyre and Sidon would rise up in judgment against some of the cities in Israel where he preached. And I believe that Abimelech and heathen people will rise up in judgment against so-called believers who commit adultery, who talk about the ten commandments and the new covenant, and then don't recognize that adultery is a great sin, which Abimelech will rise up in judgment against believers in that day.

Sure, they don't recognize that fooling around with women in the opposite sex is a sin. People like Abimelech will rise up in judgment. He recognizes that's a great sin.

And you have done to me things that ought not to be done. And Abimelech said to Abraham, what have you encountered that you've done this thing? And Abraham said, because I thought there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. It's very interesting.

This is the first place in the Bible that the phrase, the fear of God, comes. First place in the Bible where the phrase, the fear of God, comes. And notice that it is mentioned in connection with sexual sin.

The power of sex is so strong in human beings, and God has kept it like that. It wasn't the devil who created that power so strong, it was God. And he kept it so strong with one reason, among others, that he can test a man's fear of God.

Because in the thought life, in this area, it is very easy to sin, and nobody knows it. And there God has tested a man's fear of him or not. It's easy for God to test whether we fear him or not with just this one area.

It's like a litmus paper test of the fear of God. What is that man's attitude to sexual sin in his thought life, or that woman's? Immediately, God, blue or red, the litmus paper, you know whether it's an acid or an alkali. Immediately God knows, does this person fear him or not.

You don't need to check it again. One test is enough. Remember that.

And that's why this is a very serious sin. That's why we need to take it very seriously. I always tell young people, this is the first area you need to get victory over completely.

Purity in your thought life. If you don't take it seriously there, that means you don't really fear God. If you're not battling there to get the victory, you say, oh, I'm falling, I'm weak, I've done it so often.

Yeah, you don't take it seriously, my brothers. And it is going to be, it can't go too well. And further, she actually is my sister, he says, through sort of a white lie, he said.

Because she's actually the daughter of my father, not the daughter of my mother. She became my wife. He says, I told her wherever I went, to please say that you're my sister.

In other words, this is a plan they hit upon before they left Uru, the Chaldeans. And God caused me to wander from my father's house. I said, please tell everybody that you are my sister.

And so she said that. And then Abimelech gave Abraham sheep and oxen and gave Sarah back and told Sarah, verse 16. I've given your brother, sarcastically, this brother of yours, he says, I've given him a thousand pieces of silver.

And it is your vindication before all who are with you for a covering of the eyes. He gives back more. He doesn't just give the woman back.

He says, here's the money for the embarrassment that I caused you. And before all the men. And Abraham prayed to God.

And God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they were both children, because they had been barren until that time because of Sarah. Yeah, there's something that we learn from Abraham's life. Though he failed, God stood by him and lifted him up.

And quite a few things we can learn from Abimelech's life, from a heathen king's life. May God help us to walk in the light of the word of God.

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