

He Will Direct His Children

Genesis 18, 19

Key Verse: 18:18, 19

“Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

P. Ron asked the elders to speak about examples of godly families in the Bible this summer. Are you interested in godly families and their influence in the Bible? From lesson one; we learned that man and woman are created in the image of God. God then performed the wedding ceremony of Adam and Eve in the Garden. It was the climax of the God’s creation work in the Garden of Eden. Through their marriage, Adam and Even became one, in body and in spirit. So we learn that for Christians, marriage is first of all for holiness in Christ and second for oneness. Holiness and oneness in marriage leads to true happiness.

From lesson two, we learned how God established Isaac’s family through the prayers of Abraham and his servant. Also we learned the decision of faith of Rebekah in the process.

The Focus of today’s message is the contrast between the life and legacy of Abraham and that of Lot. In the process we learn some ideas of how to rear our children and how to have good influence on others. To make a long short story short. Abraham was a blessing and Lot was not. Let us see why it was so.

In Genesis 12, we learned that God called Abraham to be a blessing. Let us look at Genesis 12:2-3. Let us read these all together. **“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”** From chapters 12 to 16, we learned that God continually provided opportunities for Abraham to grow in faith, to be strong in his inner man and to be courageous in serving others. In Genesis 17, God changed Abram’s name to Abraham because of his vision for him

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to be a father of many nations. Before he became a father of many nations, Abraham needed to be a father, a good father. Before he became a good father, he needed to be a good man and husband.

I. Family hospitality (18:1-15)

Look at verse 1. The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. He said, **“If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way-now that you have come to your servant.”** Abraham bowed down to them and invited them to his tent. He told them that he was just going to give them a little water and get something to eat. But then he himself hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, **“Quick, get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.”** Abraham did not sit down passively. He ran around and told Sarah what to do. He exercised great leadership in family hospitality.

Look at verse 7. Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to the servant, who hurried to prepare it. He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree like a waiter ready to serve. We see Abraham running around like a young man. He was 99 years old. I hope that I can run around like Abraham when I am 99. Don't you? Abraham took it as a privilege to serve guests. He also was running around to prepare the best meal he could prepare. He worked very hard; he mobilized his household including his wife and servants.

We can see and feel genuine hospitality in Abraham and Sarah. Serving others is not easy. Needless to say, serving a meal is very hard, because it takes a lot of energy and time to prepare and serve a meal. But hospitality is the core of the Christian family ministry. May God help us to be continuously hospitable opening our homes and sharing meals with strangers and friends alike. Hebrews 13:2 says, **“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.”**

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It appears that they were satisfied with the well prepared meal. Then they asked Abraham, **“Where is your wife Sarah?”** **“There in the tent”** Abraham said. **Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.”** Wow! Sarah was going to have a son in one year! Now Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of child bearing. So Sarah laughed herself as she thought, **“After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”** It is funny to hear an old woman speaking like this. **“Will I now have this pleasure...?”** However, the Lord was not happy to hear the word of disbelief from Sarah’s lips. Then the Lord said to Abraham, **“Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child that I am old?’ Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”** Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, **“I did not laugh.”** But the Lord did not let her off the hook so easily. He said, **“Yes, you did laugh.”**

It was very difficult for Sarah to believe God’s promise. Sarah was not so gung ho about God’s promise of a son. She laughed at God’s word. But I believe that after being rebuked, Sarah believed. Hebrews 11:11 says, **“And by faith even Sarah, who was past child bearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise.”** God is the God of promise. We Christians are covenant people who believe the promise of God.

II. “For I have chosen him” (16-33)

Look at verse 16. When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. Let us read the verses 17 and 18 together. **“Then the Lord said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.’”** It seems as if the Lord was speaking with angels about Abraham, not talking directly to Abraham.

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It is interesting that the Lord said these words in the context of his plan to visit Sodom. God was deeply concerned about what was happening in Sodom and Gomorrah; the violence and the sexual immorality. In the context of this, God revealed his plan in regard to Abraham and his children.

First, Abraham surely will become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. So far, Abraham had only one son, Ismael (Ge 16), a son of compromise and the result of his human plan. Abraham and Sarah did not have a child yet, only the promise of a child. Obviously Sodom and Gomorrah were big towns with multitudes of people, but in God's mind, Abraham would surely become a great and powerful nation. God did not use the people in the big towns of Sodom and Gomorrah for his purpose. But he rather wanted to raise Abraham's descendants for his salvation purpose as he promised. It is the promise of God. God did not change his mind along the way. God would stick to his plan to bless Abraham and make him a blessing. After several generations, we cannot see any trace of Sodom, but we see Abraham's descendants even today including all of us. Most of us also have God's promises in our hearts since we started the life of faith based on God's word. The promise of God is real. God blesses all of us to be a great nation, following the footsteps of Abraham through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Second," He will direct his children". Look at verse 19, Let us read the verse 19. **"For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."** God's calling is irrevocable. God does not change his mind. God called Abraham to be a blessing. So it is not conditional. However, here we learn that God also wanted Abraham to direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just. Our job as God's covenant people is to direct our children and our one to one Bible students to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just.

What is **"doing what is right and just"** as Christian parents?

I do not know. But I can share a little bit what my wife Theresa and I did when we reared our 6 children. We used to pray for our children when they were

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young especially at bed time. Boys stayed in one room, using bunk beds and girls in the other. Before bed time, I prayed for the boys and Theresa went to girls' room and prayed for them. I shared this family ritual with late Dr. Lee our Pastor in a casual conversation and he said, **“Why don't you read the Bible passage a little bit in addition to prayers?”** So we read the Bible one chapter or one passage at a time before we prayed for our children. I do not remember exactly what passages I read. But later our kids told us that we read a lot of proverbs in addition to gospels.

We worry about our children. Living in our society, we even worry about children we do not have yet. Some of us wonder whether it is possible to bring up our future children in the current environment of our society. It is true that it is scary to bring up our children in this chaotic and confused world. But it is our duty as married people to have children and bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesian 6:4). Having children and bringing them up is hard. All parents will agree to that. But it is also true that we have lots of fun as we see our children grow, and in the process we grow mature as well. It is suffice to say that having children and rearing them in the instruction and training of the Lord is a great privilege and pleasure as parents.

Look at verse 20. Then the Lord said, **“The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin is so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.”** The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Then Abraham approached him and said: **“Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing-to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the judge of all the earth do right?”** God instructed Abraham to direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just. Now Abraham pleaded with God based on God's righteousness. He begged God to save the cities because of a few righteous people in the city. We learn from Abraham his spirit of prayer and his shepherd heart for the people of the city. It is useless to curse the darkness. We need to light a small lamp with compassion and prayer living in this dark world.

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We need to pray for the people of this nation as we engage in one to one Bible studies and we need to show hospitality to our neighbors and strangers.

III. The Lord destroys Sodom (19:1-38)

Look at verse 1. The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. **“My lords, he said, “please turn aside to your servant’s house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go to your way early in the morning.”**

The angels arrived Abraham’s tent at the heat of the day. But these two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening. Evening may be the best time to see what was going on in the city. When Lot saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. He also invited them to his house as Abraham had done. But Lot’s invitation seems to be rather formal than heart felt. Maybe it was the Sodomite way of hospitality. The angels insisted that they were going to stay out in the square.

But Lot insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. Lot prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. However, his wife and two daughters were nowhere to be found. May be they were busy shopping in the cool evening. Look at verse 4. Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom - both young and old - surrounded the house. They called out to Lot, **“Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.”** When Lot tried to protect the guests, he offered the mob his two daughters for sex, but they did not listen. They heaped anger against Lot and said, **“Get out of our way, this fellow came here as a foreigner, and now he wants to play the judge!...”**

They were about to break in! How did the angel help Lot? Look at verse 11. The angels dismissed the mob; striking them who were at the door of the house.

The angels had enough firsthand experience about what was going on in the city and they decided to destroy it. They asked Lot to warn any of his relatives of the impending destruction of the city. When Lot went out and spoke to his sons in law, who were pledged to marry his daughters, they thought he was joking.

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With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot to hurry, but Lot hesitated. So the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and daughters and led them out safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them. Can someone read verse 17? **“As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, ‘Flee for your lives! Don’t look back, and don’t stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!’”** But Lot was not ready to leave the city. Let us read the 18, 19 **“But Lot said to them, ‘No, my lords, please! Your servant has found favor in your eyes, and you have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can’t flee to the mountains: this disaster will overtake me, and I will die.’”** Lot apparently had a panic attack right there. Because of extreme fear, he was paralyzed and could not move. The angel led Lot’s family to a small town named Zoar and they were safe there when God destroyed the city. But Lot’s wife looked back and she became a pillar of salt.

Look at verses 27 to 29. **“Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the Lord. He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace. So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrow the cities where Lot had lived.”**

Lot and two daughters were rescued because of God’s mercy (16). But fear did not leave Lot. He and his daughters left Zoar and lived in a cave. One day, the older daughter said to the younger. **“Our father is old, and there is no man around here to give us children-as is the custom all over the earth. Let us get our father to drink wine and then sleep with him and preserve our family line through our father.”** Through this act, both of them became pregnant. They both had sons and the sons became the ancestors of Moabites and Ammonites respectably. The daughters of Lot did not follow the way of the Lord, but the custom of the earth.

When we read the earlier account of Lot’s moving to the plain, we know that it was Lot’s choice to move to the plain (Genesis 13:10, 11). When Lot first moved to the plain, he just stayed near the city. As the time passed, he eventually moved into and lived in the city. Even though he was a righteous man, he did not have any

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righteous influence in the city. His sons in law thought that he was joking when Lot spoke about the pending judgment of God. His wife became a pillar of salt. His daughters became pregnant through him. I do not know what to say about Lot: was he a cultural believer, a compromising believer? However, I can say that there is no hint that Lot directed his daughters to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just. Lot just lived in the city hoping for the best for his daughters. But his end was tragic. His daughters followed the custom of the world.

I shared a few things Theresa and I did with our children. It also needs to be said that I also still struggle with my children and do not forget to pray for them. One of them has a certain pattern of dealing with his girlfriend. Even though it seems to be perfectly fine and is the way of living following the custom of the society, I am bothered and am struggling to reach out his soul whenever I can and however I can. It was easy to chase my children when I was younger and when they were younger, but it gets harder when I get older. But I ask God not to forget my children and will pursue them to show the way of the Lord to the end. Maybe my struggle for my children or the children of this generation will not be over until I see my Lord face to face.

We studied Genesis 18 and 19 as a part of our house church ministry Bible study. Obviously this passage is not particularly about the house church or the model of the Christian family. We only learn something from Abraham, the father of faith in contrast to Lot who lived in the same time period.

As a covenant person, Abraham believed God's promise and believed his blessing. In reality he let Lot choose the fertile land and he stayed in desert area. He lived a humble life and was eager to serve strangers willingly and joyfully. More than that he spent time in praying for others, especially for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. The true legacy of Abraham is his friendship with God and his prayer on behalf of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. He directed his children and household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just. He was a director. Sometimes we do not know what to do when we think about our children and young people of our time. But from Abraham, we learned that he did not lose his direction along the way, but pursued God's promise to the end. May God help us who are living in the U.S, in the 21st century after about 4000 years since Abraham's time, whether we are parents or not, to pray for

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our nation continually and carry out the labor of one to one Bible studies at our campuses and at home as we pray.

God bless you all.