

JANUARY 8

Genesis 18:20-19:38

It would have been nice if verses 16-19 from yesterday were included here. You might want to go back and read those just to get the entire context. This entire discussion is an important part of Abe's education and it gives some deep insight into how the Lord works with us.

Genesis 18:20-33

Vs. 20-21 The Lord states the case against Sodom. It is interesting to think of what this outcry was. Was it some general sense of violation against God's righteousness or was there a satanic accuser? If the latter is so, it is ironic since Satan also delights in deceiving and corrupting mankind. It is worth noting that the angel of the Lord wasn't going to act from "hearsay." He was sending two angels to visit the situation. I wonder if He still does something similar today.

Vs. 22-25 Note again that this angel of the Lord is the Lord. Think of this: Abraham is standing with Jesus. That sure puts an interesting twist on Jesus' words in John 8:39-59 regarding Abraham believing what he was told. Unknown to the Pharisees, Jesus had had a meal and a fairly long conversation with Abraham. Abraham and Sarah had believed all the truth that Jesus had shared with them. Now Jesus had shared more truth and was letting Abraham respond in faith.

It is interesting to me that Abraham understood that God had to be righteous. Actually, all men do, even though they themselves are not completely righteous. Even Satan holds God to a righteous standard while his own righteousness is totally nonexistent.

Vs. 26-33 Abraham, as a disciple, was invited to chime in concerning the destruction of Sodom. For Abe the issue was not only saving Lot, but also understanding the Lord. What are your observations here regarding the Lord's answers? What do you learn about God through this whole interaction with Abraham? If you got to talk to the Lord, for coffee, who would be on your heart?

Genesis 19

Vs. 1-3 Since it mentions that *Lot was sitting in the gate*, it could be that Lot had some official title. The gates were where city officials sat and did business. Lot was rich so it could be that the lure to attract him to live in the city also came with a position. On the other hand, Lot may have just been sitting there, but the Lord knew he would be there. The angels tested Lot here by suggesting that they should sleep in the town square. Notice that Lot pressed them strongly, suggesting that beyond Middle Eastern hospitality, Lot was urged on, knowing the danger these guests would be facing.

Vs. 4-11 In Sodom, the angels were, obviously, never in danger. This was a testing of Lot and the people. Years later in Israel something just like this will happen. I will never understand why Lot was willing to throw his daughters out the door to this mob. But I guess it's better not to judge.

V. 5 *That we may know them* meant to have sex with them. They would have raped those guests had it been in their power to do so.

Vs. 12-26 In this sordid tale of woe, the effects of living in Sodom are evident in Lot and his family. Lot had no credibility with the people, and now his sons-in-law just laughed at him. However he might have rationalized his contact with the people in Sodom, thinking he was doing them good. He saved exactly no one; however, he and his family became infected by the godlessness.

V. 16 You have to wonder what was going on in Lot's thinking.

Vs. 17-23 This is a very lengthy talk by Lot and it amounted to nothing. In the verses that come we'll see that even though Zoar was saved because of Lot, the people still knew Lot was somehow tied into what happened in Sodom. Lot didn't stay in Zoar.

V. 26 Lot's wife was punished, and though we don't totally understand what happened, she must have rebelled inwardly. The Lord was saving them and must have had a reason for what He did to her.

Vs. 27-29 Isn't it interesting that it says that *God remembered Abraham* and therefore saved Lot.

Vs. 30-38 It just kept getting worse for Lot. The effect of living in Sodom and not knowing the Lord is shown here in Lot's daughters. Sodom was destroyed, but they brought the "stench" of Sodom with them. Notice that the children became nations, both of which became a problem to Israel. One note to God's forgiveness and mercy is that there is one person from Moab in the family tree of Jesus. Ruth, the Moabitess, would become the great-grandmother of King David and would be in the line of Christ.

As disciples, if we live for Christ, with our treasure in heaven, those around us have a better chance of catching fire with true faith, than if we "blend in." Following as a disciple means doing the work of following and reaching out. To complain about a lost world, while at the same time enjoying the good things of a lost world, is not being a disciple. Farmers farm. Harvesters harvest. Disciples disciple. Disciples are not harmless and they don't gripe. They press on to make more disciples.

Matthew 6:25-7:14

Matthew 6:25-34

This lesson to His disciples is big. Jesus taught this again and again. When He sent out the Twelve and the 70, He didn't allow them to take any money or food with them. Their heavenly Father would meet their needs. In Jesus' training of His disciples, this was a crucial lesson on following in the harvest and living with a spiritual, eternal perspective. As disciples, this promise and confidence in God is to be our truest heart and attitude in working for and following Christ in this world. This world is not our home. We're not "just passing through." We are here on assignment. God is constantly with us. He will provide our food, clothing and lodging. Even the hairs of our heads are numbered. And the only way you learn this is to follow Christ as a disciple in the harvest. At this point Jesus and the Twelve had all given up their careers and were being sustained financially by the "coincidences" (e.g., people who got healed, who decided to help) that happened to them along the way. The Twelve hadn't been sent out yet; but living with Jesus, they saw it was possible to serve God in making disciples, and to rely on His care, and not lose weight. This is a big one for us to learn too and it takes years of living by faith to truly internalize it.

Matthew 7:1-14

As you read this section, and before you read my comments below, try to put these thoughts together into a flow of thought meant for you as a disciple. It seems like Matthew and the Spirit are leaving out some important bridges between thoughts. Maybe the reason the Spirit is doing this is the same reason Jesus spoke in parables; that is, so that those who are really interested and work to understand (those who have) will get the meaning, and will get more, while those who have not, and don't really care, or have more important things to do...but why finish the thought? And then there is that little word "seek," which means to...but again, why finish the thought? You can if you want to.

Vs. 1-2 Jesus teaches His disciples not to judge. As disciples we know we are in a world steeped and lost in sin. Like Jesus, we are to work impartially getting His Word out. His Word and how people respond to it is the only lasting and worthy judgment we should have any interest in.

Disciples can't afford to take sides in trivial things in this life (2 Tim. 2:4). We live in a lost world. We were lost. As disciples making disciples, we are to be humble in the grace we've received and reach out to help others find Christ and follow Him.

Vs. 3-5 So, Jesus warns His disciples about not being humble and says they should be fully involved in removing logs from their own eyes. Jesus knew it would be a temptation to be focused on criticizing others. In Luke, Jesus mentions that a disciple is not above his teacher, meaning that if the disciple maker has logs, so will the disciple. That's a warning. A disciple can't help others grow in faith with a critical attitude, and can't help people come to the place of removing harmful things from their lives unless they themselves are willing to do the same.

I remember a line from a tape by Howard Hendricks, "So I'm sitting across from this guy with his deep seated alcoholism and I say to him, 'The Spirit would be happy to move in and help you take control,' but I can't control my time, I can't control my money, I can't control my appetite. Friend, I'm no better off than he is. We both need the same message." Where is your "log" that will destroy your credibility and lead you to make log-ridden disciples? And if you understand this properly, it isn't really an issue of any particular "log," rather the issue is following Christ in the harvest honestly, openly humble, growing and grateful.

But it is not as if Jesus is saying don't help others. He's saying to do it with humility and integrity, not as a critic and judge, but as a fellow disciple dealing with yourself before Christ. We are to be there to help others remove the speck.

V. 6 But not in all cases. There is a kind of unbelief where Jesus says, "Just walk away." This is good for a disciple to know. We are not to witness to everyone, because not everyone is ready. This is not a suggestion, but a command. This command and the understanding of "who art the dog" and "who art the schwein" is best understood by the humble, "non-judging," "log removing," "helping others" disciple. The self-righteous and self-absorbed see dogs and pigs everywhere. The naïve think everyone will listen.

Vs. 7-11 Jesus seems to be saying, that instead of a hard combative attitude, we, as disciples, are to be in a constant mode of asking, seeking and knocking regarding our work in the harvest. I apply these to reaching out and making disciples, not getting stuff for ourselves. Only God can open doors to people. This asking, seeking, and knocking might also apply to needs we have as we are following Christ; but I really think it is silly to assume that this command is just for our needs, as if our only purpose on this earth is to eat and wear clothes and stay alive. Jesus already addressed that issue. This command is meant to give us the confidence to follow in the harvest bearing fruit.

V. 12 So, knowing that the Lord has our back in reaching out, we are to be open and generous as we pour out our lives into the lives of others. Loving our neighbor sums up *the Law and the Prophets*. (Rom. 13:8-14, 15:2)

Vs. 13-14 Therefore as a disciple, make sure you are living a life that has the strain and difficulty of reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples. If your walk as a believer is too easy you may be on the wrong road. All of us have the strains of life: fragile relationships, breaking cars, failing health, etc. Being a disciple on earth is about more than life maintenance; yet for many, that is all their faith helps them do, maintain life, and that is how Satan pins them down and keeps them out of the harvest. We have faith and strength for the harvest and in the harvest we find more faith, strength, and joy than we realized we'd have. Yet Jesus is saying here that following Him involves work, with lots of sweat and strain.

In World War II my dysfunctional relatives became functional because they were no longer living lost, self-absorbed, dysfunctional lives. They were involved in the battle, and the battle gave them health and purpose. The war was hard and they would never have chosen the war, but they were called to it. They became lost again when the war was over. I really think the Lord

knows what He's doing with His disciples. The harvest is hard and disciple-making is a battle; but in following Christ, it brings health and purpose to His dysfunctional followers (disciples).

Psalm 8

Isn't it amazing to think that this awesome, amazing, infinitely powerful God loves us and invites us to work with Him to make His love known? What a thought that He would choose such foolish, weak, dysfunctional beings to love and honor.

Vs. 1-2 This is a contrast. God is glorious above the heavens yet the mouth of a baby can honor Him. This honoring is like the foolish bringing to nothing the wisdom of the wise.

Vs. 3-4 This is another contrast. God's power and creativity are utterly amazing, so why does He busy Himself with man?

V. 5 Satan certainly had a hard time with this reality, causing him to trip over his own beauty and pride. "What? Serve those ugly little things, when I'm so beautiful and worthy of worship myself?" So, Satan in pride rebelled against God.

Ironically, v. 5 is also quoted in Hebrews 2:7 & 9 regarding Jesus. So, once you've read this psalm through, as if it is written about us, then read it through as if it is written prophetically about Jesus. (You'll see at least one other verse that is written about Jesus in the NT.)

Vs. 6-8 That dominion still is in force and now that Jesus has redeemed mankind (the believing) that power rests again in the hand of a man. Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He.

V. 9 Amen.

Proverbs 2:6-15

Vs. 6-12 Notice that this person is submitted to the Lord, walking in His way.

Vs. 12-15 These might not be openly evil men, just men who don't submit to the Lord and who want to walk in their own way.

If you read this and then reflect back over the OT portion for today, you'll see why Abe was one way and Lot another, why one was blessed and why one ruined his life.

As disciples, we are being offered great blessing as we, if we, follow Christ. (John 15)