

A LOT IN SODOM. GEN., 13:11

AND LOT CHOSE HIM ALL THE PLAIN OF JORDAN.

There are three great factors in the making of a life, namely: heredity environment, and choice. The first two, heredity and environment are mighty fashioning, fixing forces that meet every one of us at the very threshold of life. They, according to the sociologist and psychologist vie with each other to attain the ascendancy in deciding the course of life. It is yet a highly debatable question as to which has the final and most deciding effect. According to some, heredity and environment alone make or destroy man; but according to the record of sacred history and the basic, inexorable law of choice, this latter influence is the most deciding factor under heaven in determining the final end of all men.

The power of choice is a gift of God. It is one among those divine attributes conferred upon man by his maker; it places him in a category to himself, far removed from all other creatures of earth. Choice is the mark of humanities greatest dignity, the point of humanities greatest danger. With the free privilege, or right to choose, man rises to the ecstasies of heaven, or sinks to the despair of hell. He can go down and wallow with the swine in the far country of sin or he can home among the stars. He can dwell with those who inhabit the tombs of sin or he can choose to have companionship with saints and angels.

Choice is a voluntary thing; yet it involves a divine obligation. It is a privilege; yet, it is a command of God. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Choice may be delayed, evaded, omitted; but the day finally comes when all the important issues of life must be dealt with and disposed of.

A choice is a momentous thing, for a choice results in an action, and an action results in a habit; a habit results in a character, and a character results in a destiny.

It is our choice rather than our environment that forms our character and settles our destiny. I refer you to the circumstance that surrounds our text. Abraham had gone to Canaan and it is said, "Lot went with him." This is our first introduction to the man Lot; and this is a pretty good revelation into his character. You can put Lot's character into these five words; "And Lot went with them." Lot was a man without convictions. This is the point where conviction and belief differs. A belief is what a man holds while a conviction is what holds the man. There are many people like Lot who are going with somebody else whether they are right or wrong. In fact, the bulk of humanity is a slave to what others are doing.

One man takes God's name in vain because other men do it. One man drinks because other men drink. One man smokes and chews because other men smoke and chew. It is easy to go with the crowd; you need not have any mind of your own, no purpose, or will, nor culture. It doesn't require any originality to lose your soul. You don't need to be a creative genius to find your way to hell - just follow the crowd and you will land there.

One has only to take a look at the outlandish styles of this era to realize that people are slaves in their imitation of others. Though they dislike and even detest the absurd arrangement of apparel, yet with feverish abandonment they go all out to keep pace with whatever ridiculous styles that come out of New York or Hollywood.

Everybody recognizes the difference between a man who has convictions of his own and one who is governed by the opinions of the crowd; the one possesses character majestically strong and royal, the other is superficial and muddy in character. The person who has no convictions of his own follows the trend of the mob. What the mob thinks, he thinks; what the mob does, he does; where the mob goes, he goes.

O, for the sturdiness of true independence! It is glorious to see a Martin Luther standing all by himself starting a new fashion of freedom. It is wonderful to see a Caleb withstanding the clamour of the other spies, and wholly following God. It is great to see the three Hebrew children standing up while the masses all about them fall down and worship the golden image. It is magnificent to see a Daniel refusing to defile himself with the King's meat while every body else was eating at the King's table.

When the time came for Lot to make his choice, he revealed ~~with~~ what was in his heart. He chose the well watered plains of the Jordan; signifying by this that his affections were tied close to things material rather than on things above. One's choices ^{are} ~~is~~ an index to one's character.

There are just two ways set before us in the matter of eternal life. We have all voluntarily taken the way we are going. You are on your way to heaven by choice, or on your way to hell by the same medium. There is nothing arbitrary about God's dealing with us. He sets before us the plan of redemption. He describes the blessedness of heaven and so vividly depicts the horrors of hell, but he does not choose for us nor force in the way to go.

Some will try to evade this responsibility by saying that they are creatures of environment and cannot help what they do. That is only a coward's way to escape the dealings of divine justice.

I will admit that environment is a great and mighty force, but it, of itself, has never yet saved a single person; neither has it condemned a man to perdition unless he chose to bow at its altars and worship at its shrines.

Environment did not save Adam and Eve. They had a better environment than you or I will ever have, yet they fell from that beautiful and wholesome place. Nor did environment on the other hand debase Joseph. He was sold into that idolatrous country, lied on by an unprincipled woman, put in prison for years, and yet we see him rising superior to every evil force about him. God made Joseph bigger than his circumstances and what he did for Joseph, He can do for you and me. You are not a creature of environment. You are a creature of your own will; you are what you are because you will to be. Your character is pivoted on your will; your salvation is pivoted on your will; and your ^{the laws of} eternal destiny is pivoted on your will. If at last you make your bed in ~~Hell~~, you will not get rid of the fact that the gulf that separates you from love, life, and heaven was fixed by your own self-will. For everybody that goes to Hell goes on his own feet, in his own shoes, by his own free choice against the will of a brokenhearted God.

There are two great elements in the life of every person, that if hooked together, can lift a man above every environment and save him from every kind of heredity. They are the will of man and the power of God. The will of man may sometimes be weak, but when it is linked to the power of God, it can rescue a human soul from all of the concentrated evils of earth, ~~and hell~~. The choice of Lot was a product of his own self will. He made that choice in the light of immediate gain. He failed to count the cost of the final consequence. So it is with the myriad souls that sob out their hearts in ~~hell~~ today; So it is with many of you. There are hot, scalding tears running down

over the cheeks of multitudes today who failed to do this very thing. There is on record many a dishonest transaction, defeated candidate, horrible suicide, dishonorable divorce, financial failure, and untimely death that never would have soiled the pages of human history had men only taken time to consider the final consequences.

Every man is made for two worlds, and only as he lives with the background of another world in his thought can he fulfill God's purpose here and ever live with Him in that world to come.

My appeal to you out there is to come to grips with this important issue and choose you this day whom you will serve. tomorrow may be forever too late.