

THE ATTITUDE OF FAITH TOWARDS GOD AND MAN

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Hebrews 11:8-10, Genesis 13:14

IN Genesis 13 we see Abram purified, blessed, enriched in cattle, silver and gold, pitching his tent from place to place, and honoring his God wherever he comes. Then follows the incident with Lot. There was strife between the herdsmen of his cattle and the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the Canaanite dwelling in the land. There is nothing sadder than for the world to witness strife between the children of God. Abram cannot suffer it. Often there is no other way of avoiding such strife, than for one or the other to yield everything entirely. In this we trace the true character of an Abram. Faith lets go of earth to grasp heaven. It does not hesitate between the one and the other. There are unhappy mortals, alas, who have forsaken earth, yet never placed a foot in heaven, and thus find themselves adrift.

Verses 8 and 9 say "If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right." or the reverse "choose!" It is thus the pilgrim father speaks. What has the prince of the world to do with those who are not of this world? Let all the secret cords be loosed, everything by which thou art still tied, even if it be in mere fancy. Let the idols all be broken, lest when having to take some step of decision you should find yourself

held captive by the assertion of your own rights; an unworthy position for any child of God! Abram says to Lot "Wilt thou go to the right or to the left? My heart is not set upon either. And Lot?

Verses 10 and 11: Oh, the children of this world lift up their eyes and reckon as to what will be most to their advantage, what will best ensure and brighten their future, how they will most easily prosper. They behold, as Eve beheld, and to those who thus lift up their eyes, temptation and fall are close at hand. Abram did not look at the land, he looked at Jehovah, who had said to him: "In this land shalt thou dwell." How much more secure was He than Lot! He had left it to God to care for him. Yes, thus safe may we be in desert places. God can make the wilderness fruitful as the smiling plain.

Verse 14: "Lift up now thine eyes," saith Jehovah. How different to when "Lot lifted up his eyes." When, fearing the allurements of Satan, we no longer trust our own eyes, then the Lord can command, "Lift up thine eyes," and He gives us something different to behold. But if we do so without the worth of the Lord, we may at one moment be frightened, and the next fall a prey to some temptation or imagination. Let us never forget we are citizens of heaven, who have nothing more either to expect, or to fear from this

world. The Lord does not say to Abram, "Behold the land that yet remains to thee after Lot has chosen his portion," no, but He says: "Look northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." Lot has settled down in a small sphere. That which we seek or choose for ourselves will become our prison. God gives Abram the whole world, who seeks nothing in the world. It is a royal people that seeks nothing for self here below, that can leave to others the trifles of earth, and simply and solely abide with God. Such, whose conceptions are royal, will be royally dealt with, and obtain a royal reward from God.

Verses 16-18: "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth." "Arise and walk through the land, in the length of it, and the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee." "Then Abram removed his tent and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord." It is so beautiful when a child of God only leaves Ebenezers behind him on the way; memorials of the faithfulness and deliverance of his God. Ebenezers are thank-offerings, pointing forward. God, who hath hitherto helped, will yet deliver. The deeper a heart is filled by grace to acknowledge this, the more impossible will it be to doubt the sufficiency and faithfulness of his God. It is thus that a seed is increased and matured to Abraham.

In chapter 14 we meet with another trial. Here we have a picture of Abram returning from

the fight against the enemies of the king of Sodom and Gomorrah. The latter had been thoroughly routed (verse 10) and Lot carried away. Thus it happens when one pitches his tent in the land of the ungodly, blinded by the glitter of this world. Sodom was a Garden of Eden, but what an inner desolation, an alluring apple, but a worm within! Abram arms his servants (verse 14), goes forth, smites the kings, and brings back Lot with all his goods. In verse 17 we discover another important opportunity for acting as the servant of Jehovah, when the king of Sodom comes to meet him; verse 18 gives us the interview with Melchizedek, by whom he is blessed and to whom the patriarch gives the tenth of all the spoil. Hebrews 7:14 says the Lord blesses His own, making them independent of any human help, which might affect their royal standing. But He never forces His benefits upon man. He now meets Abram, and imparts His blessing to him through Melchizedek, just as the king of Sodom approaches.

Communion with God, and being blessed afresh by Him are indispensable to the maintaining a royal attitude in view of any decisive interview with others, or with the great ones of this world. Verse 21 expresses the gratitude of the king of Sodom, for help received; "Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself." Yet the earthly monarch may not be reported to act more nobly than the servant of Jehovah. Abram's answer (verses 22-24) is worthy of the father of the faithful: "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, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." He is satisfied with what his God gives him; is jealous for Him, and only careful that the others should have their share of the spoil. It pleases God, when His riches satisfy us. He who would be ready at any moment to believe God, must keep his hands clean, must go on his way pure from covetousness, or anxiety, honoring the Possessor of heaven and earth, who giveth to each of His people out of His store-house all that he needeth.

Plants of faith can only flourish in a pure soil. He who looks out for his own honor, cannot honor God. "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another" (John 5:44), as covetous Pharisees!