

EXAMPLES OF SELFISH FAITH AND UNSELFISH FAITH

Genesis 13:5-18

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: It is not uncommon to see selfish people but it is less common to see unselfish people and even among Christians (believers) there are selfish people. The Bible is full many examples of actions of people and there is an excellent example of selfishness and unselfishness described in very vivid detail. Abraham and his nephew Lot are the examples. Lot was Abraham's nephew and Abraham had treated him as if Lot were his own son in every way. As Lot grew up and became a man, there developed a sharp contrast between the two personalities. Both believed in God but one became a carnal, worldly believer while the other was a spiritual believer. Thus a picture of unselfish faith and selfish faith.

- Abraham lived by faith, Lot by sight.
- Abraham was humble and respectful while Lot was prideful and self-exalting.
- Abraham sought after God and His promises, while Lot sought after the bright lights, possessions and pleasures of the world.
- Abraham was spiritual minded but Lot was worldly minded.
- Abraham kept his eyes on the eternal, upon God, while Lot focused on a worldly city and all that was within the walls of that city.
- Abraham became the father of believers and Lot became the father of two daughters who brought disgrace to his name.
- Abraham was eventually make "heir of the world" but Lot lost all his possessions in the fiery destruction of Sodom and spent much of his last years living in a cave.

I. AN ARGUMENT STARTED THE DIVISION BETWEEN ABRAHAM AND LOT

1. The land could no longer support both Abraham and Lot's flocks.
 - They felt more secure together, living in such dangerous surroundings.
 - They were Uncle and Nephew, family and loved each other very much.
 - It was Abraham who suggested that they needed to separate.
2. The workers of the two men began to fuss and disagree over the best pasture land and watering places.
 - Abraham and Lot had not argued but their laborers had.
 - Abraham was wise enough to see what was happening and knew that sooner or later serious conflicts could come up.
3. The surrounding "nations," tribes, etc., living in the same area knew both Abraham and Lot and they also knew of the conflict between the workers of the two men. Here was a great opportunity for Abraham to bear witness to the surrounding neighbors, so how he handled the situation would give either a strong or a weak witness for God.

II. ABRAHAM WANTED TO STOP THE CONFLICT, DIVISION

1. Abraham pointed out to Lot that first of all there needed to be peace between them and their workers.
 - Family should not fight among themselves for they would need one another.
2. Abraham then offered to give the best pasture land to Lot although he had the right to choose first:
 - He was the older, head of the family.
 - He was the one to whom God had promised the land.
 - He was the leader who had brought people into the promised land.

3. Abraham gave up his right to choose first:

- His greatest concern was the relationship between Lot and himself and he would do whatever it took to keep things peaceful between himself and Lot.
- Abraham was soft and caring toward Lot, wanting no strife between them or their herdsmen.
- Abraham showed great wisdom for he knew that if he chose the best land for himself and forced Lot to go somewhere else, Lot would be bitter toward him.
- Abraham trusted God to take care of him.

(Abraham's sacrifice is a small picture of what Jesus Christ has done.)

- Both gave up their rights.
- Both wanted peace above all.
- Both humbled themselves and acted unselfishly, giving and sacrificing to the ultimate degree.
- Both trusted God to take care of their needs, no matter what.

III. LOT MADE HIS CHOICE IN SELFISHNESS

1. Offered the first pick of the land for his "ranch", Lot immediately surveyed the land to see where the most fertile and watered region was.

- There is no record that Lot ever thanked Abraham even though Lot had been treated like a son all his life by Abraham.
- Lot is an example of so many today who neglect to be thankful and show little appreciation.

2. Lot saw the best land surrounded the Jordan river:

- It was well watered.
- It was almost like the Garden of Eden.
- It was a lot like the land of Egypt with all its fruitfulness.
- His mind was focused upon the world and what it could give him in position, possessions, pleasures, honor and wealth.
- It was also the land that had two large cities, Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - Lot paid no attention to the morals and ungodly behavior of the two cities for he perhaps he felt that he and his family would not be influenced by the ungodliness of the cities.

3. In selfishness, Lot chose all the best land for himself.

- He chose the entire region, refusing to offer Abraham any part of it, selfishly.
- He foolishly chose the area where ungodliness was rampant.
- He again selfishly chose material wealth over the safety of his family and their relationship to God.

(An application of this behavior can be seen today in:

- Why some people move seeking a better position, better job, better scenery, more money, larger house, etc.....they should also look for:
 - the atmosphere of the area, is it "christian?"
 - are there any churches nearby?
 - what kind of community, schools, businesses are in the area?
- One should never be misled by appearance for there is more to life than physical and material. The fullness of life comes only from God and God alone. Every decision in life should be made considering God and what impact the move would have on his/her spiritual growth, etc. Lot failed to do this - YOU must not.

IV. ABRAHAM'S UNSELFISHNESS WAS BLESSED BY GOD

1. Abraham lived where he would prosper spiritually by continuing on his pilgrimage of faith, refusing to settle down in one place.
 - His herds and flocks were large and needed to constantly move around for new pasture.
 - Others had settled the land long before Abraham arrived and it would be dangerous for him to stay in one area too long.
 - Abraham did not want the immorality and wickedness of the surrounding people to influence his family and workers for God had called him to live a life of faith and separation from the worldliness of the earth.
2. Lot moved where he could prosper within the world and enjoy its pleasures and possessions and he chose to move close to the two large cities, right in the midst of the ungodly cities where he and his family would be influenced.

V. ABRAHAM'S FAITH WAS REWARDED

1. Having to leave Lot was a major event in Abraham's life, a turning point.
 - He was hurting because the one who had been like a son to him was moving away.
 - He felt insecure against those around him who might want to steal his flocks.
 - He was wondering if he had done the right thing by allowing Lot to choose first - was it unwise?
2. Abraham needed to hear from God.
 - God did speak to Abraham because it was He who had to lead Abraham to separate from Lot so that He could bless Abraham.
 - 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 reveals that God does not pour out blessings on a believer who is unequally yoked with a worldly person.
 - Now that Lot was gone, God could then speak to Abraham and meet his need.
3. God rewarded Abraham's faith - by His Word, by a vision of coming promises, gave Abraham strong assurance, a great vision of promises.
 - God told Abraham to lift up his eyes and look as far as his eyes could see, in every direction and what he saw he would one day have.
 - Lot lifted up his eyes to the world, but Abraham lifted up his eyes to his promised land.
 - Lot lifted up his eyes in self-sufficiency, but Abraham lifted up his eyes in trust.
 - Lot lifted up his eyes from an uncommitted, worldly heart while Abraham lifted up his eyes from a committed spiritual heart.

CONCLUSION:

1. Actions of a selfish man and an un-selfish man and the results of their actions are seen clearly in the account of Abraham and his nephew Lot.
2. Faithfulness is always rewarded by God.
3. Selfishness also has its reward and it is never God's blessings.
4. Take a good look at the actions of these two men and decide which one you are like and which one you want to be like for YOU are like one or the other.

