

Daily Devotional, April 21, 2021 Will You Surround Yourself with Good or Evil?

“Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.”
Genesis 13:12-13

For many people, successes in our lives can trap us into thinking we have everything to do with our own success. Gideon led a small army of warriors to battle and defeated a much larger army. Through his actions, Gideon led his people as a man who acted as if he wanted to be honored as a king but by refusing to actually serve as king led to his demise. Gideon took the gold that was part of the spoils of his victory to fashion an ephod for himself, an ephod being a vest-like garment worn only by the priests. In doing so, he defiled himself before God. Gideon didn't honor and appreciate where his success had come from. When the Lord blesses us we are called to thank and honor Him, not assume that we made it happen on our own. Even worse, to expect others to honor us for God's mighty work.

Another trap we fall into that can lead us into sin is in what we surround ourselves with. What we keep close to us can lead to good or bad, and that is a result of the fall of humans. Ever since the Garden of Eden, sin has occupied our world, but since its arrival on the first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has entered in to convict us when we camp too close to where sin may flourish. We see this pervasiveness of sin in Lot's story. Lot and Abram were very successful. They had been richly blessed, therefore temptation was near. We see this in our own lives. Whether it is materially or spiritually, our highs can be followed by tempting and sinful lows if we are not careful. Even the seemingly smallest decisions in our lives can have deep and impactful consequences for good and bad. When we are surrounding ourselves with temptation we are asking for trouble.

We can often grow comfortable with our proximity to trouble even to the point where we are comfortable in it. We know this to be true because it happens to us. We get around an old group of friends and the temptation of old, poor choices are there. What drives our choices at this point is key. What is our proper motivation when facing old or new temptations? We need to examine why we would make one decision over another and determine who does it honor? From my own experience, the great majority of my poor decisions, of which there are many, are born out of selfish desires. When I'm not thinking "who does this honor" or "what does God's Word say about this," I can rationalize almost anything. That is why it is so vitally important to consistently be in the Word and to hide God's Word away in our hearts. We need the sword that God has given us to defend against temptations that our closeness to sin can present.

To secure his own position in that society, Lot chose to live in Sodom and tolerate its godlessness. We see how this works out for him in Genesis 19. Lot immersed himself in a sinful place and grew ever blinder to the depravity going on around him. This spiritual blindness leads to some of the vilest actions in all of scripture. His surroundings that he chose, supplied more than enough opportunity to make the wrong choices. What poor decisions have you made that were borne out of a similar motivation? What can we do today to help protect against making damaging choices?

Father, You know what is in my heart, good or bad. Everyone around me is choosing to do things their way, and it is very tempting for me to do so as well. But, I want Your will to be done in my life. If it is not Your will for me to take this path, then Father, give me divine strength to accept and to follow your lead. May every decision I make be pleasing to you. In Jesus' name, I believe and pray. Amen.