

## January 13

*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 1 John 2:1*

IF we find that through lack of faith or weakness of the flesh a wrong step has been

R1938 "If, in the daily scrutiny of our ways, which is the duty of every Christian, we discover that in any particular our words have been dishonoring to the Lord, we should remember that, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1); and in the name of our Advocate we may approach the throne of grace, explain to our Heavenly Father our realization of the error, our deep regret at our failure to honor his name and his cause by a holy walk and conversation, and humbly request that the sin be not laid to our charge, but that it may be blotted out through his gracious provision for our cleansing through Christ, humbly claiming that in his precious blood is all our hope and trust.

Thus we should render up our account for every idle word; and by our words of repentance, supplemented by the merits of Christ applied by faith, shall we be acquitted. Otherwise the idle words, dishonoring to the Lord, will stand against us and condemn us, and we will be obliged to suffer the consequences. The first consequence will be self-injury, for every evil thought or word indulged hardens the character and inclines it the more toward unrighteousness. The second consequence is a bad example to others, and the stirring up of evil in them. "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." (Prov. 15:1.) Thus, as the result of unwise or unkind words, we may stir up about us difficulties which will become the agents of retributive justice to teach us the lesson of self-control, and consideration for the feelings and opinions of others. It is often the case that the Lord (or the devil) is blamed for sending trials which are simply the natural results of our own mistakes. And those who fail to locate the root of the trouble (*in themselves*) pray in vain for the Lord to remove miraculously what they themselves could obviate by obedience to the Word, and vigorous self-discipline. "If we would judge [and correct] ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord [largely by the experiences through which our own faults put us], that we should not be condemned with the world." (1 Cor. 11:31,32.)"

### R5491 "HE THAT IS BEGOTTEN OF GOD DOES NOT PRACTICE SIN"

*"My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous."--1 John 2:1...*

The Apostle says: "These things I write unto you that ye sin not." He does not say: Yes, we are all sinners --we cannot help it--and must continue in sin. No! But he says: Realizing that you commit trespasses which are contrary to the desire of your heart, remember that there is a place to go, a Mercy Seat, where you may confess your sins and obtain forgiveness. Remember that "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Remember that He gave Himself a Ransom-price for all, and that the merit of this price was applied by

taken, contrary to the Lord's will and our best spiritual interests, no time should be lost in retracing the steps and in calling upon the Lord. We have an altar consecrated with the precious blood of Christ, far superior every way to that which Abraham consecrated with the blood of typical ani-

-----  
imputation on our behalf. Remember that all the sins of the flesh are forgivable through faith in His blood. Bear this in mind, too, that He knows that with our imperfect flesh we cannot as New Creatures do perfectly, and it is because of this that God has constituted Him our Advocate and Head over all things...

Thus we see that the righteousness of Christ, through the great offering for sin which He made (His own body of flesh), is the basis for the forgiveness of our sins. And the blessing and privilege of going to the Throne of Grace for mercy and pardon for daily shortcomings...

But the New Creature sinneth not--he "does not practise sin"--as the *Emphatic Diaglott* translates this passage. He who loves sin will sin; he who does not love sin will not sin wilfully. He might be entrapped through his weak flesh, or fall into a snare of the Adversary, but this would be unintentional on his part. And Jesus, our Advocate, will intercede for such sins, but not for deliberate sin. Jesus did not die for wilful sins of the New Creature, but for sins due to the fall--Adamic sin. So if any sin wilfully as a New Creature, he perishes thereby. Our first life was in Adam; our first death was the Adamic death. When we accepted Christ and the New Creature was begotten, our second life was begun. Now if such a one should be guilty of wilful sin, he would no longer have any standing whatever before God; he would again come under the sentence of death--the Second Death.

### SLACKNESS IN THE NEW CREATURE

We might remark here, incidentally, that sometimes there is a kind of mixed condition; the New Creature has been slack in guarding against temptation, and has yielded with some degree of culpability. To the extent that the New Creature has been derelict, negligent, the face of the Lord will be darkened to him. If the flesh start to do wrong, the new will is not to consent to, or allow the wrong. The New Creature is to mortify, put to death, the flesh. To whatever extent he is slack in this matter, to that extent it is sin. A full sin would be a full consent of the new will, a full turning away from God.

But the flesh might have certain desires and temptations, and there might occur a partially wilful sin. In such a case stripes would be administered in proportion to the wilfulness. Such an individual might get into a place where he would be spiritually sick, so that the Lord would entirely shut him off from the light of His countenance. The Apostle James points out that the only proper action then would be for the individual to apply to the Elders of the Church, the seniors of the Church, the spiritually minded ones, that they go with him to the Throne of Grace in order that he might obtain mercy and be reinstated.

Seniors, spiritually minded ones not Elders, might do this service for the one who is sick, but preferably it should be the chosen Elders of the Congregation. This course would be a very humiliating one for the sin-sick brother, but such action might

mals, and the apostle exhorts us, "Let us come boldly [courageously--full of faith] to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need."--*Hebrews 4:16 Z.'01-233 R2848:3*

save that soul from death by a proper humbling of self "under the mighty hand of God." Thus such a one might be recovered and become again a true child of God.

### CHRISTIAN, WALK CAREFULLY!

If we realize that through lack of proper watchfulness, or through some infirmity of the flesh, we have taken a wrong step, contrary to the Lord's will and to our interests as New Creatures in Christ, let us lose no time in retracing the step and in calling upon the Father for forgiveness. "We have an altar whereof they have no right to partake who serve the [typical] tabernacle"; an altar not sanctified by the blood of bulls and goats, but by the precious blood of Christ; and we are urged to "come boldly [with holy courage and confident faith] to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 13:10; 4:16.) How blessed this Throne of Grace, this Mercy Seat, provided by our Father's love! How undone we should be without it! Yet, beloved, let us walk with great carefulness--let us never presume upon the mercy of our God by being careless of our steps. Let us, instead, with earnest prayer and watchfulness, "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," while our Father "worketh in us both to let us do His good pleasure."--Philippians 2:12,13.

### "Christian, walk carefully!

oft wilt thou fall,

If thou forget on thy Savior to call.

**Safe** shalt thou walk through each trial and snare,

If thou art **clad in the armor of prayer!"**

R4615 "MY SOUL, BE ON THY GUARD" ... Illustration of the dog: It is when we feel that there is some provocation for letting down the chain, so that the dog can do some good with his teeth -- that there is somebody that ought to be bitten--that is the time when we throw ourselves open to danger. We are slow to learn to fully appreciate the fact that the dog is not to bite *anybody*;... Speak that which is good and that only. This is an absolute command: "*Speak evil of no man.*"

R4626 "We see a difference between this condition of willfulness and the one in which the New Creature might be temporarily overtaken in a fault and his "dog," so to speak, break loose and bite some one. The "dog" would get a whipping, and apologies would be made... The one who approves of his dog's going out and biting his brethren or neighbors has evidently lost the Spirit of Christ which he once had."

(1Pe 1:15 KJV) "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;"

R5482 "The new will is, in substance, a will to be like our Father in Heaven. The Apostle Peter exhorts, "As He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy." Holiness is the standard of perfection. Our will must be holy when we first make our Covenant with

God. Nothing less than a holy will is acceptable to Him. If we had had an unholy will, a will not submissive to God, we would not have been accepted. So if our *will* be holy, we shall, as far as we are able, *do* His will.

As He who has called us is holy, so we, as far as our will is concerned, will be holy. And we will so direct our mind, as to be holy in life so far as is possible. We will apply the principles of God's holiness to every affair of life. We will observe the Golden Rule, that we should do to others as we would that others should do to us. Whoever neglects to apply these principles of holiness to his own life is not growing in the new life, not being transformed. We should seek to have our minds fully in accord with God's mind, and our conduct as far as possible also in alignment."

If our mind is not running in the proper groove, we must see to it that we turn it into the proper groove. We want to render obedience to our highest conception of what is the Lord's will, as far as we are able. Our will will be determined by God as loyal in proportion as it has been on the *alert to watch the mind and the body*, the tongue and everything pertaining to our conduct."

(1Pe 1:16 KJV) "Be ye holy; for I am holy."

#### R5856 "UNIQUE ARRANGEMENT FOR THE PRESENT AGE

The Church is an especially called-out class. "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," said the Master. "I have chosen you out of the world." Mankind in general are in a different heart attitude from those who come into the Church. It is only the minority who now hunger and thirst after righteousness. God in mercy keeps back the Truth from those to whom it would not in the present time be a blessing. This class that the Lord is now calling out from the world are "called to be saints."

The word saint stands for one who is holy. The word holy has the significance of the word *whole*—that which is entire, lacking nothing. God, who is holy, calls His children to be holy, saying, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16.) But we were by nature unholy; hence His arrangement for our justification, our being made right, whole. The world in general will be made right during the Millennium. None is made right now in the actual sense...

#### WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY

##### ILLUSTRATES GREAT TRUTH

We all know something of the wireless system of telegraphy. This is one of the blessings of this "day of the Lord's preparation" for the incoming New Age. It may serve as an illustration of how God has been sending out His Truth during the Gospel Age. If we would hear the Lord's Call, we must have co-hearers. If we do not have co-hearers, we cannot hear His Message at all. We need to have responsive hearts, ready to receive with gladness the Message of God's love and mercy...

Only those who get their hearts in tune with God can hear it all, and the more fully in tune you get your heart the better you can hear. If your instrument is out of tune, if something happens to get you out of touch with the Heavenly electric wave, then you cannot hear the wonderful melody. If you do not keep in close touch with the Lord,

you will fail to catch the harmony. You are out of tune with the Infinite One.

#### JUSTICE THE BASIC QUALITY OF CHARACTER

What is the character of God that we are learning more about as we study His Word? We find that the very basis of God's character is Justice, absolute Justice... The nearer we come in line with justice, the better we shall understand and enter into the spirit of God's great Plan. We trust that is what we are striving to do.

But there are many ways of being unjust. We may say unjust things about our neighbors; we may make trifling faults appear to be great faults; we may color things unjustly. We may use words with a certain intonation or emphasis, with a shrug of the shoulders, giving a wrong impression which might be detrimental to the reputation of another. Although we might not really mean to wrong another, yet this course would be wrong, and might do incalculable harm. When you say, "I would not wish to be seen in that man's company," you might not *mean* to do wrong, and yet be guilty of slander. Your co-hearer is out of tune with God.

Then in the *mind* one might be unjust. Many people seem to become prejudiced against certain things or persons without just reason. To that extent they are out of harmony with justice. What we need to do is to think righteously, soberly, kindly, along the lines of the Golden Rule, to let our words and deeds be in harmony with the principles of righteousness. Thus we shall be greatly assisted in the development of the sterling Christian character which is absolutely essential if we would have our Father's approval.

Justice, then, is the basis, the first thing necessary, in building character. From this basis we are to go on to the attainment of sympathy, benevolence, forgiveness, love. God has been very loving and sympathetic with us. He has provided us a Redeemer. He has covered our many blemishes from His sight. Then, as we seek to copy God, we shall wish to be kind and forbearing and helpful toward all. But we must be *just first*. If we have an unjust twist in our mind, it will interfere with our communion with God, and we shall be in danger of failing to make our calling and election sure.

We are continually surrounded by the spirit of the world—hatred, envy, malice, strife. So we must keep very close to the Lord to counteract this spirit. The world and the things of the fallen nature are so close to us that we can with difficulty avoid being contaminated by them. One can hardly pass through a vile neighborhood without carrying away vile odors. But the Lord has furnished us with a most effective disinfectant in His Word. All the cleansing we need is derived from the Message which God has given us, with its explicit instructions. This wireless Message from Him tells of His love for us, speaks peace through Jesus Christ our Lord, makes known to us our privilege of becoming heirs of God and joint-heirs with our Lord Jesus."

R4662 "Be ye holy, even as your Father, which is in heaven, is holy." He is the pattern, and we are to copy that pattern as much as possible in our daily lives; but especially are we to have it as the accepted *standard of our wills*, our minds.

The Apostle refers to the Word of God as water which cleanses us from defilements of sin and selfishness; speaking of "the washing of water through the Word," by which the Bride is to be cleansed and made fit for joint-heirship with the heavenly Bridegroom. (Eph. 5:25-27.) The Word of Truth cleanses our hearts by showing us our imperfections, in contrast with the divine perfections."

R5127 "Heart-loyalty to the Lord means continual effort to bring all the conduct of our lives, yea, the very thoughts and intents of our hearts, into subjection to the Divine will. (2 Cor. 10:4,5.)"

R5938 "CONFESSION OF SIN ESSENTIAL TO FORGIVENESS--*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"—1John 1:9...

#### AN INSIDIOUS SNARE OF THE ADVERSARY

Further on in this Epistle, the Apostle uses the word "sin" in a different sense from the above, saying, "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him nor [even] known Him...He that committeth sin is of the Devil... Whosoever is begotten of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God." Again he says: "We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that Wicked One toucheth him not."—1John 3:6-9; 5:18.

In these passages the Apostle uses the word "sin" in its full or absolute sense, meaning *wilful* sin, deliberate sin, intentional sin—not merely shortcomings and faults, due largely or wholly to the imperfections of the flesh, inherited from our ancestors. No one, the Apostle assures us, who has been begotten of the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of holiness and truth, could have any sympathy with sin so as to wilfully, knowingly and intentionally engage therein. All who so love sin and wilfully do it and approve it after they have a knowledge of the Truth, are children of darkness, who love darkness and who thus show that they have the spirit, or disposition of Satan...

At first thought, many may be inclined to say, "Well, I am in no danger of that sin; for I am sure that I would not commit sin wilfully, intentionally, designedly." But let us notice, dear friends, that there is a way in which sin may come upon us without being at the time a wilful sin, but which later might become wilful sin. For instance, any transgression committed, either in total ignorance or with only a partial acquiescence of our wills, might become a full, wilful, deliberate sin *afterward*, if we should come to a clear knowledge of the truth respecting the subject, and fail to repent of it to the Lord and to undo so far as is in our power the wrong toward our fellow-creatures. To consent to a sin clearly and fully understood simply because at the time of its committal we were in ignorance, and to refuse to make amends for it, and thus endorse the sin intelligently, would appear to make of it a *wilful* sin."

R5923 "Our great Adversary is a very wily foe, and is on the alert to seize every opportunity to ensnare and entrap us.... Resist

stoutly and unequivocally the very beginnings of sin, to resist the approach of temptation to be disloyal to God in the slightest degree, by hastening to the Throne of Grace in every time of danger!...

But by fighting a good fight, we are to prove to the Lord that we are doing the best we can. We are not merely to make a little effort, but are to put forth *all our strength*, which will be supplemented by the grace of the Lord. If, then, in spite of *our best efforts* we come short, as we surely shall, what then? "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Thus we are to continue "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." This does not mean that we are to keep from ever getting any spot or wrinkle upon our garments; for we could not avoid so doing. But God's wonderful arrangement is that we may come to Him and claim the merit of the blood of the Savior who died for us. We need not permit a spot or wrinkle to remain so as to blemish our glorious wedding robe...

The condition of those who fail to keep their record clean before the Lord is a very sad one. After the first or second offense they say to themselves, "I cannot go to the Lord again; I will go to sleep and forget it." They wake up in the morning out of harmony with God. But they think, "Well, I cannot help it." At night the thought that all is not right with the Lord comes again. "I know that I have had plenty of difficulties today

and more failures; but I cannot go to God. It is of no use." So the breach widens. They forget the great mercy of the Lord. They forget that He has said, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust."

This is a wrong course, fraught with extreme danger. We should clean up our accounts with the Lord every day. We should retire every night just as we should wish to do if we knew that we would not wake up in the flesh. In the morning before we arise our first thought should be, "How can I please the Lord today and be helpful to others, and especially how can I overcome myself?" Some who fail to take advantage of the grace offered for every time of need gradually get so far off from the Lord that by and by they scarcely think about it any longer. They have a reverence for God, but they do not love Him. He is not close to them, and they know it. They know the right way, but they feel that they cannot walk in it. They realize that they have spots on their robe, but they try to put the thought behind them. If this course continues, where will it end?

These are not the things to put behind us. The things that the Lord has *forgiven* should be put behind us; but the things for which we have not sought forgiveness should trouble us until they are settled. It is not a good plan to wait until evening to go

to the Lord if we realize that we have displeased Him. If we can go to our closet at once, we should do so. If not, we might close our eyes for a moment and get into communication with our Father in Heaven through the merits of our Savior. Let us keep in constant touch with the Lord, and tell Him about all our affairs, our mistakes, our unwitting trespasses...

#### CARELESS ONES UNFIT FOR THE KINGDOM

Those who get spots upon their robes and leave them there will not be fit for the Kingdom of God; for the Bride of Christ will be composed of only those who will be "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." Jesus is to present this class blameless and unreprouvable before the Father. They did not walk perfectly, without a blemish; but they were careful to keep their garments unspotted by going often to the Lord. They let nothing keep them away. This is the spirit of the Bride class. We each wish to be of that class, dear friends. If any of us are not sure just now as to our standing with the Lord, let us make haste to go to Him and see that the record is cleared by our dear Redeemer and Advocate. Let us not wait, but go at once."

(Heb 4:16 KJV) "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

### R2847 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0) ABRAHAM'S AND LOT'S TESTINGS

--GEN. 13:1-18.--AUG. 4.--

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."--Matt. 7:12.

DEVELOPMENT of character implies a variety of experiences and tests. In choosing Abraham as his agent and channel through whom he would bring to the world his purposed blessings, God chose a good man, but not a perfect one--for there was not a perfect man to choose, as there has not been since, of all Adam's posterity. While God called Abraham, he made him only partial promises until he had manifested faith by obedience. And it was appropriate that various and severe tests of faith should come before the fulness of divine favor should be guaranteed him. One of these faith-tests came through a drouth in the land of Canaan, and, as a result, a food scarcity, a famine, in the region where Abraham had settled, flocks and herds.

It would naturally be a severe test of faith for him to see his cattle lean and dying, and to think of the fertile country which he had left, and that this drouth-stricken land was the one to which the Lord had called him. He must go somewhere to find water and sustenance, and concluded not to go back to Babylon, but to journey south-westward into the country bordering Egypt. Egypt was well advanced in civilization, and like Chaldea, his former home, was a heathen land--to the extent that the people had considerably lost sight of the one God and his worship, and had become worshipers of various deities. It was a dangerous experiment: Abram might have become enamored of the civilization, etc., of Egypt and have lost his respect for the Lord's promise in regard to Canaan; yet it did not have this effect, but apparently, on the contrary, became a blessing to him; for his experience there convinced him more and more that he could not have true happiness under the prevailing conditions: he would rather wander about and have no continuing city, and not be bound by any of the customs and rules of the world which recognized not God. His experience taught him to look for, to hope for, to wait for, the New Jerusalem city or government, which has not yet been established, but for which the Lord's people still pray: "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth."

Abraham little realized how much he needed to pray, "abandon us not in temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." On arrival he, as a great man, was brought to the attention of the king, and Sarah, his wife, was introduced,--but as his sister, or niece, not as his wife. Abraham heard probably about this time of an incident which had occurred with one of the Pharaohs, of which we now know through recently discovered papyrus records--that at the instance of his princes he sent an armed force and took a beautiful woman from her

husband for his harem. Sarah was a beautiful woman, and Abraham feared that Pharaoh might kill him in order to have his wife. This difficulty probably did not occur to him when he started his journey, nor until he had arrived there and was called before the king. Thus the Lord's people always find it: if they leave the land of promise, seeking better things in the world, they find their difficulties and trials greatly increased.

Abraham determined that as an expedient for the preservation of his life he would tell but a part of the truth and speak of Sarah as his sister, without acknowledging her as his wife. The transaction was an ignoble one every way, and quite unworthy of the man; but the Lord did not forsake him, but, as the record shows, returned Sarah to him with a rebuke from the heathen king which must have stung Abraham severely, and have served as a lesson for the remainder of his life. Thus all things work together for good to them that love God--even their mistakes and slips become lessons and blessings under divine providence. Having learned his lesson, Abraham quickly retraced his steps to the land of promise, returning again to Bethel where first he had built an altar to the Lord and formally consecrated himself: there again Abraham called upon the name of the Lord. The prompt retracing of his steps is also a lesson for the Lord's people of this Gospel age. <sup>(1)</sup>If we find that through lack of faith or weakness of the flesh a wrong step has been taken, contrary to the Lord's will and our best spiritual interests, no time should be lost in retracing the steps and in calling upon the Lord. We have an altar consecrated with the precious blood of Christ, far superior every way to that which Abraham consecrated with the blood of typical animals; and the Apostle exhorts us, "Let us come boldly [courageously--full of faith] to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need."--Heb. 4:16.

One of the strongest evidences of the truth of the Bible records, and that they are not the work of priests or knaves, is the fact that the weaknesses and frailties of its grandest and most luminous characters are depicted with as free a hand as their virtues and strong qualities. Had the story of Abraham and the story of David, both men full of faith and after God's own heart, and acknowledged to be his friends, been concocted, they assuredly would have omitted all the blemishes of the present narratives. As it is, the weaknesses of

(1) Jan. 13, Manna 1 John 2:1

these men, and divine compassion toward them notwithstanding these, and their faith and repentance and reestablishment in divine favor, have been lessons of incalculable value to the Lord's saints throughout the age, many of whom have at times found themselves more or less similarly entrapped, and to some extent stumbled by the great temptations of the world, the flesh and the Devil.

Abraham's flocks and herds increased, and the number of his servants. Likewise also did Lot's--tho he was by no means as wealthy a man as his uncle. Prosperity seems as likely to bring trouble as adversity, or more so; and it does not surprise us to find that a strife broke out between the herdsmen of the two masters, and that apparently the strife extended to Lot. The land at that time was not thickly settled, nor was it owned and controlled by syndicates; hence Abraham and Lot moved hither and thither through the grazing country, merely seeking to find unoccupied pasturage, and as the Canaanites (Lowlanders) and the Perizites (Highlanders) dwelt in Canaan, it necessarily meant that migratory bands, such as Abraham's, would find the pasturage at times somewhat restricted. Abraham's prompt course for the maintenance of peace is worthy of emulation. His words to Lot on the subject would make a good motto for the home or for the shop; "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee...for we are brethren." The Lord's people are not all peaceably disposed according to the flesh, but peaceableness is a prominent element in the new nature, the new mind, the new will, the new heart; hence peaceableness is to be cultivated and more attention is to be given to it in proportion as we find our natural disposition to be contentious. This is one of the ways the Lord's people are to be renewed in word and in deed; --"By the transformation of their minds."

Abraham was not only peaceable, but generous, as his proposition to Lot shows; for altho he was the richer of the two by far, and his larger herds and flocks required more abundant provision, he nevertheless gave Lot the choice. Here is another lesson for all of the Lord's people: generosity, not an unreasoning and unreasonable generosity which would give away everything, but an even-handed, fair generosity which is well represented in our Golden Text; *viz.*, the golden rule that we should treat others as we would reasonably wish them to treat us: whoever follows this rule, will, like Abraham, find that in the end it will be profitable--even tho it may at first seem unprofitable.

It would appear that Lot was less generous than his uncle--more selfish; and taking advantage of the latter's liberal proposition he chose the rich, fertile valley of the Jordan--the land of Sodom, of which the record is that it was "like the garden of the Lord" (the Garden of Eden), and like the most favored portion of Egypt. Lot was a keen business man apparently, for his choice signified not only the richest of the grazing country, but additionally the best market for his flocks and herds; because the Jordan valley seems to have been a commercial highway frequented by traveling caravans, etc., the best of customers for sheep and cattle. Abraham and Lot together might have taken the Jordan valley at first, seeing its suitability to their occupation: no doubt the reason why Abraham avoided it is found in the fact of the wickedness of the people there, and that he did not wish to bring either himself or wife or servants into close contact with such people, preferring the less fertile district because of their separateness from such associations, with which he could not feel in harmony or fellowship.

Lot possessed much less faith and much less character than his uncle, but was also a good man, and his determination to make the country of the Jordan his home does not signify that he had fellowship with the Sodomites. On the contrary, the record is that their course "vexed his righteous soul." (2 Pet. 2:8.) He evidently was deluded, as many of the Lord's people of today are deluded, into association with evil influences for the sake of worldly prosperity. He no doubt persuaded himself that he could live separate from the contaminations of Sodom, and even exercise a moral influence over the unrighteous. How unwise, very unwise, his course really was may be seen in the light of his subsequent history. The wisdom of Abraham stands out in striking contrast, and the two experiences furnish valuable lessons for all who are seeking the heavenly city and praying, Thy Kingdom come. Abraham's course illustrates our Lord's words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness and all these [needful] things shall be added unto you." Lot's course illustrates our Lord's words, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world!" Lot's quest for wealth, etc., no doubt brought rich returns, for he became a wealthy and influential man in Sodom, but his wealth and influence cost too much; first, they cost his peace of mind, for "his righteous soul was vexed;" he had no real happiness. Second, it cost him his children, sons and daughters, all but two unmarried ones, and even they apparently were blemished

through their contact with evil example. And it cost him also his wife, whose sympathies for her children over-balanced her interest in the Lord and righteousness. It cost him additionally, in the end, all his flocks and herds and wealth, all of which went down in the fire from heaven upon the city of destruction.

There is a great lesson here for us all, especially for such lovers of righteousness as have the care, the guardianship of children: the lesson is that they should think less of earthly advantages, social, political and financial, and think more, much more, of the moral and spiritual influences and advantages obtainable through isolation from the evil which is in the world,--so far as possible "make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame [blemished through sin] be turned out of the way [of righteousness]."-- Heb. 12:13.

Abraham did not attempt to coerce his nephew; but, properly no doubt, after having advised him to the contrary, he let him take his course, contenting himself with giving the admonition and example to the contrary. Here is another good lesson for the Lord's people; very many who like to have their own liberty are disposed to use force and coercion in dealing with others, and the results are generally bad for both parties. Lack of faith lies at the bottom of such difficulties; self-will attempts to regulate our own affairs, and branching out attempts also to regulate the affairs of others: whereas a consecrated will, resting by faith upon the Lord's promise, permits the Lord to have the helm; to control not only in respect to the believer's personal interests, but also in respect to the interests and affairs of others. Abraham had manifested his faith in God, not only in respect to the future blessings promised, but also in respect to the incidental details of his every-day life. Hence he could afford not only to not interfere with Lot's liberty, but could be generous to the extent of giving Lot his choice, knowing that the Lord would take care of him, and fulfil to him all the gracious promises incidental to his call. And in proportion as we are children of Abraham by faith we should have and should continually exercise similar faith, that we may experience similar blessings under God's providence.

While Lot's choice led him farther from the right, Abraham's blessing was increased by his course; for again the Lord appeared to him, in a manner not explained, and gave him renewed assurance respecting the original promise, telling him to look in every direction and to know assuredly that, while this land at the present time was under various rulers, it should in time be given to him and his posterity everlastingly. Yet with this renewal of the promise must have come another testing of faith, because Abraham as yet had no child. How improbable, therefore, the fulfilment of the Lord's word, that his seed should ultimately be very numerous, hyperbolically "as the dust of the earth!" Yet Abraham's faith wavered not. Likewise the faith of the Lord's people today wavers not respecting his promise--for it has not yet had a fulfilment, as the Apostles Paul and Stephen both declare.

Abraham lived in the land many years and died there, yet was a pilgrim and stranger; a sojourner and not an owner to the day of his death. (Heb. 11:13.) Stephen's explanation of the matter is very explicit. (Acts 7:5.) He declares that God never gave him so much of the space as would be covered by his foot; and points out that the time for the fulfilment of this promise is future--during the resurrection, the Millennium of Christ's reign, after the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, the glorified Church, the bride with the Bridegroom, shall have been established in the control of the world as God's Kingdom.--Dan. 7:13,14; 1 Cor. 15:24.

With each manifestation of obedience on the part of Abraham came fresh blessings from the Lord, fresh repetitions and expanded declarations respecting the divine purpose, strengthening and encouraging him. Nevertheless he understood that the realization of his hope lay in the future, and this was clearly indicated by the Lord's words, "Arise, journey through the land, in the length and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee." In compliance with this instruction, that he was to be a pilgrim, moving from place to place, Abraham only removed to Mamre, and, doubtless in harmony with his custom at each new stopping place, he built there another altar unto the Lord--another typical acknowledgement of sin, of his own unworthiness, and of the fact that his standing before God, his acceptance with him, was in the merits of a great Sin Offering which had not yet been made. So with us who are the Lord's people, wherever we are; we are under divine care, and may rest, and may have the peace of God which passeth all understanding, ruling in our hearts: nevertheless, we are not to be at home, nor to seek to feel at home under present imperfect conditions. We are to continually remember that the Lord has promised us a heavenly inheritance, and we are to seek for and wait for it, assured that it will be ours if we remain faithful to the end of life's pilgrimage.