

What We Must Learn From Sodom's Salvation

Recently, I was reading the book of Genesis again and, as I was reading the chapters that shared the life of Abraham, I noticed something in the text that I had never paid attention to before. I am always amazed when I read a text that I am very familiar with and find something I had not noticed. Whenever this happens, I stop what I am doing and dig deeper because I know that the reason I noticed those words at that moment in time is because G-D was trying to show and teach me something.

In this case, I was reading in Genesis 14, in the series of verses that tell of the time when Lot was captured and taken hostage and Abraham gathered 318 trained men and rescued Lot, all of the other people, as well as recouping all of the things that were taken by forces of king Cherdorlaomer. The truth is that I have read this particular narrative ever since I was a small child and, for some reason, never paid close attention to the fact that in Genesis chapter 14, G-D sent Abraham to save the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now the Valley of the Siddim was full of tar pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, they fell into them, and those who remained fled to the hills. So they took all of Sodom and Gomorrah's possessions and their food and left. They also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions, and they left (as he was living in Sodom) (Gen. 14:10-12, TLV).

That's right. In Chapter 14 of Genesis, G-D sent Abraham to save Lot and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. As a matter of fact, the text says in Genesis 14:16 that when Abraham defeated king Cherdorlaomer, he brought back not only Lot, but all of the possessions and people from the cities this king

had defeated.

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“He brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot and his possessions, as well as the women and the other people” (Gen. 14:16).

This is only four chapters before G-D tells Abraham that He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, and five chapters before G-D actually destroys the cities.

Now that we have seen this in the text, for a moment think about what Abraham may have been thinking when G-D told him these cities that Abraham had just saved and restored were going to be destroyed. If you were Abraham, would you not have wondered at least to yourself why did G-D bother to let you save the people and restore their cities if He were only going to destroy them completely anyway? After all, you and your 318 soldiers all risked your lives to save the very people that were about to be hit by fire and brimstone.

Maybe this was the reason Abraham bartered with G-D when he asked if G-D would save the cities if there were only 10 righteous. Surely at least 10 of those whom Abraham had delivered and restored would be righteous.

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As I read these words and thought about how Abraham might have felt, both at the end of his victory in chapter 14 and upon hearing that those that he saved were about to be destroyed in Chapter 18, I tried to understand what lesson I could glean from the two truths: the first truth, that G-D used Abraham to rescue and restore the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the second truth, that even after G-D had used Abraham so mightily

to save and restore these cities, He was going to destroy them.

As I said above, whenever I notice something in the Bible that I had not previously noticed, I strongly believe that the reason I am seeing it now and not earlier is that G-D is drawing my attention to the text to teach me something I need to see and know in real time. I began to try to view what was going on in my world to see if I could tell what G-D was trying to teach me.

The first thing I noticed was how clear it was that G-D had sent Abraham to restore Sodom and Gomorrah at least once, before He ultimately judged them. The second thing I noticed was that the two cities got worse instead of better after G-D used Abraham to restore them. I began to think about the many people whom, over the years, G-D had used me to help restore—people who had been captured by the things of this world, whom G-D used our congregation or me to help rescue them out of their “captivity” through prayer and physical support—only to see them go back into captivity and destruction.

As I stood up with a different view of the ministry G-D has given to all of us, I had recommitted to lead all those who are willing to enter into the battle for the souls of those who have been captured by the adversary. At the same time, I had a deeper understanding that even if we are able to see many people delivered from captivity, it is possible that many of them will ultimately choose to walk contrary to the ways of G-D. G-D used these words to encourage me that every soul is worth fighting for, even if in the end they choose to reject G-D’s perfect salvation and are destroyed.

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