

FINDING GOD

by

D. L. Moody

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CHAPTER TEN

THE WORLDLY PROFESSOR

WE HAVE FOR OUR SUBJECT, “The Worldly Professor.” There is a class of people nowadays that seem to say with a good deal of pleasure that they are Christians, but they are not the spiritual kind. They are paying members rather than praying members. They flatter themselves the church could not get on very well without them, and they seem to think it is really better to belong to that class.

Now, I want to call your attention to a man of that class today: It is Lot, and, as I have said, Peter was a near kin of us all; I think we will find Lot pretty close relative, if we will study his character I think we will find that we come very near him. I think you will find a good many more Lots in the church than you will find Abrahams. There are a good many more Jacobs than Josephs—men that are walking by sight rather than by faith.

The first glimpse we get of this character is in Genesis 11:31, 32: **“And Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.”**

Now, we find in 12:1, 2: **“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.”**

God had called him out of the land of the idolaters, He had called him away from his kindred, and he came, it says, to Haran. If you will look at the map of that country you will find that he came halfway; and he stayed there five years, until his father died. It was affliction that brought him out of Haran.

I think you will find that a good many of us have got as far as Haran and there we have stopped. God has called us to the promised land, and the Lord wants us to go clear over into Canaan, but we think it is better to live on the border between the two; and the border Christians at the present time are the ones who are doing so much harm, not only to the cause of Christ, but to themselves and their own families.

What we want is to get out of Haran and get into the Promised Land where God wants us to go. We find that after Terah, the father of Abraham, died, they started down into the Promised Land, and the first thing that met them there was a famine. God will not have a man that he cannot try. This was a great trial. Not only that, but they found this land occupied. God had promised to give it to Abraham, and yet it was occupied. He goes down into Egypt.

I have not followed that out, but I think it would be a very interesting study to look and see if God ever sent anyone down into Egypt, unless it was His Son when Mary and Joseph took Jesus and fled from the men who wanted to slay Him, and that the Scriptures might be fulfilled which say that He should call Him out of Egypt.

Lot went down into Egypt, and there he got rich, and the world would call him very successful. And there was the beginning of the trouble between Lot and Abraham. They came up out of the country rich. While Abraham was down there he fell into sin, and it was there he denied his wife. We find that his son Isaac did the same thing—fell upon the very same stumbling stone that Abraham fell upon. It shows that our children are following in our footsteps. And when they came up out of Egypt we see a strife among the herdsmen. Riches very often bring strife and trouble.

If Abraham had been like some men nowadays there would have been a good chance for a lawsuit. They would have gone into a lawsuit before those heathen and caused a good deal of scandal. But Abraham was a man of faith. He said to his nephew, ***“We can’t afford to quarrel here among these heathen; let there be no strife between us. You go to the right and I will go to the left, or you go to the left and I will go to the right. You take your pick.”***

Then was the beginning of Lot’s trouble. He made a mistake. If Lot had allowed God to choose for him, he never would have gone down to Sodom. That is clear. The Lord of Heaven never took Lot by the hand and led him into the well-watered plains of Sodom.

I don’t believe God ever led one of His children down into Sodom. I think the sweetest lesson I have learned since I have been in Christ’s school—I have been a good while learning it; I wish I had learned that lesson the first year I came into His school—is to let the Lord God choose for me when it comes to temporal things. We are apt to think we can choose better than the Lord can. My little children are very apt to think they can choose a good deal better for themselves than I can for them. But they don’t know what is for their good half as well as I do; and I don’t know what is good for myself, especially in regard to temporal things, as well as my Father does. He can choose better for us than we can choose for ourselves.

Now, in the sight of the world, Lot made a very fine choice. I will venture to say the men in his day said he was a shrewd, keen, sharp, long-headed businessman; and if he should live twenty-five years, he would be worth more than his Uncle Abraham. He had got all those well-watered plains of Sodom. He was a very shrewd businessman. He was a man to be commended in the sight of the world. The world would commend such a spirit as that. But Abraham let his nephew take his choice, and they separated, and that was really the greatest mistake that Lot ever made. There was the beginning of his troubles.

When we begin to choose for ourselves we will always be making mistakes of that kind; and the mistakes of our lives, we can see every day, are many, if we attempt to choose for ourselves.

I remember I wanted to teach my little girl this lesson some time ago, when she was a little thing. She had a good many dolls around the house—broken legs, and broken arms, and eyes, all lying around; and she had been teasing me a good while to get a big doll—a great big one. So one day I thought I would get her a big doll, and we went to a toy shop. There was a basketful of little china dolls there, about as big as your finger. She got one and said, “Papa, isn’t this the prettiest little doll you ever did see? Isn’t that cunning? Now, Papa, won’t you buy me that doll?”

“Well, now,” I said, “Emma, if you want me to, I will, but I was going to pick you out a doll this time. Hadn’t I better choose for you?”

“No, Papa, I want that doll.”

She insisted upon it, and I paid a nickel, and we went off home. A day or two after, I said, “Emma, do you know what I was going to do when I took you into the toy shop the other day?”

“No.”

“Well, I was going to buy you one of those great big dolls you wanted so long.”

“Why didn’t you do it?”

“Because you wouldn’t let me.”

“Why wouldn’t I let you?”

“Because you wanted to choose for yourself. You said you would rather have that doll.”

She bit her lips. She saw she had made a mistake; and from that day to this I have never been able to get that girl to pick out anything. She is fifteen years old. She says, “You pick; you choose.”

When I was going off to Europe, I said, “Now, what shall I get for you while I am in Europe?”

“Just what you please.” I could not get her to pick out anything. She says, “You pick for me.”

Now, if we let the Lord choose, He will choose better for us than we can for ourselves. Lot wanted to choose for himself. I will venture to say when he left Abraham, if you had talked to him about going to Sodom, he would have said, “Oh, no, go into Sodom! Do you think I would take my wife into Sodom? Do you think I would take my children down into Sodom—into that great city with all its temptations? Not I!”

He pitched his tent toward Sodom.

He looked toward the city, and it was not long before his business took him in there. He went down there perhaps to sell his cattle, and found there was a good market. Some of the leading men wanted him to come down there. He could make a good deal of money—could make money faster. When a man pitches his tent toward Sodom, and gets to looking in, it is not long before he gets in there, tent and all. It was not long before Lot got down into Sodom. His business took him there.

If you had talked to him he would have said: “Business must be attended to. A man must attend to business, you know.”

“But then it will ruin your family.”

“Oh, well, I am going to make money and get out of it. When I get enough to retire I will get out of it, move back and live on the plains with Abraham. But I must attend to business first.”

Many a man puts his business before his family. Business must be attended to in order to get rich, let the consequences be what they will; let ruin and desolation come upon the family, I must accumulate wealth while I have the opportunity. Undoubtedly Lot reasoned in that way, as a great many people reason now.

The next thing we hear of now is that Sodom has a war; and if you are going into Sodom you have to take a Sodom judgment. When the judgment does come you have to take a part of it. If you take Sodom’s money you must take Sodom’s judgment. War came, and the king of Sodom was defeated in battle and Lot was taken prisoner, his wife and his children. As soon as Abraham heard it, he called his servants, 318 of them, and went in haste after the enemy, overtook them, got Lot and his family, and brought them all back.

Now, Lot ought to have kept out of Sodom, he ought to have stayed on the plains with the tent and altar, because all the time Lot was there in Sodom we never hear of his having an altar there. We never hear of his calling on the God of Abraham down there. He was down there trying to make money, and not to worship. That is not what he went to Sodom for. Money was what he was after; and instead of staying out, he went back in again. That ought to have been warning enough.

If you had reasoned with him, undoubtedly he would have told you he must go back and make up what he had lost. He had lost a good deal. He had got a start; he was known; he held some real estate down there, and he must go down there to look after it. There had been a fire, and the fire had burned up a number of his buildings, and he must go down and rebuild; so he takes his family and goes back into Sodom. In the sight of the world Lot was one of the most successful men in all Sodom.

If you had gone into Sodom a little while before destruction came upon it, and began to inquire of its leading men, they would have told you Lot, the nephew of Abraham, was one of the most successful men in all Sodom. He held office. We find him sitting at the gate; that is a sign that he was an officer; perhaps they made him a judge; a good, high-sounding name, Judge Lot.

It is a good title; the world honored him; Sodom honored him. They liked him very well. Then he would have reasoned in this way: "Don't you see, I have got an influence by coming down here."

He was a man of great influence in the sight of the world—immense influence. They would have told you he was one of the most influential men in all Sodom. He owned, perhaps, the best corner lots, and he may have had his name on them. You might have seen his name on a good many of those corner lots, and on the best buildings in town. If they had had a congress in those days, he would have been a very popular man to send to congress. It would have been "The Honorable Mr. Lot, of Sodom." They would have made him mayor, perhaps. He was a man the world delighted to honor. The world delights to honor that kind of a man; a man of great influence.

But I want to call your attention to one thing. He was there twenty years and never got a convert. That is the man of influence! Look around and see where the worldly Christians are. How many souls are they winning to Jesus Christ? Are they the men that are building up Christ's kingdom?

I tell you those men are doing more to tear it down than any other class of men. Lot was so identified with Sodom, and so much like the men of Sodom, that when he came to testify for the God of Abraham do you think they would listen to his testimony? Not a word of it. Mrs. Lot, his wife, moved in the very highest circle, probably. If she rode out she had the very best turnout. If they had theaters in those days you would have found her at the theater. Her children, of course, were in the world, and they had to be like the world. Of course they danced. They were what you call dancing Christians, theater-going Christians. If a nice opera comes along, the Chicago Church Choir or something of that kind, and it comes on prayer meeting night, they are all there. They are not at the prayer meeting. Ah, you smile, but the church is full of them today. We have our Lots.

Twenty long years he stayed down there in Sodom; and when the messengers of God visited him, what did they find? I would be ashamed to read it to you. It would bring a tinge of red upon your cheeks. Many of you would blush and hang your heads. A child of God down there in Sodom! A child of God in such a dark place! Those two messengers didn't have any written Word. God sent messengers down. It had been a long time since Lot had seen any messengers from Heaven. When he was back on the plains with Abraham, with the tent and the altar, they visited the tent, and he was quite familiar with them. He had seen them often talking to his uncle, but he had been down there in the mists and fogs of Sodom, and he had not seen those angels.

Late one afternoon two of them made their appearance at the gate. He was there sitting in his place of office, and he knew them. He invited them to his house. Most of you know what took place. If they had not performed a miracle there the Sodomites would have slain those two men of God. The Sodomites rose up against them. Lot tried to quiet them, and they mocked him. "This stranger coming here to dictate to us!" Where is his testimony? They didn't receive his testimony. These men tell us they want to get influence over the world and are going to reach the world in that way. Do they reach it in that way? Do worldly Christians reach the world? The world reaches them and pulls them down. They don't pull the world up.

I never knew one that did. It is the separated man—it is Abraham with the tent and altar—that is out of the mist and fog of Sodom, that is going to do Sodom good; not the men down in Sodom, living like Sodom.

Separation is what we want today. We want the men of God to come out from the world. There is a difference between the men of God and the men of this world. They that serve the god of this world are the servants of sin and Satan. They that serve the Lord Jesus Christ do not belong to this world. They are citizens of another world. And these two messengers found such a horrible state of things that they said to Lot, **“Have you got any other children in Sodom besides these two daughters here in this house?”** And they found that two of his daughters had been given away to the Sodomites. Think of it. He had got rich; got money; he had got Sodom’s money. But two of his daughters had been given away to the Sodomites—those men living in such awful sin, and such awful wickedness. What do we see today? Fathers and mothers giving their daughters to ungodly men, drinking men, gambling men, licentious men, men whose hearts are as black as Hell; but they have a little money, and hold a little position, drive fast horses. Professed Christians! And that is the worst of it. Lot professed to be the servant of the most high God, living down there in Sodom.

The messengers said, **“Go get them out; we are going to destroy this place. The wickedness of this place has come up to high Heaven, and God is going to blast it. The day of judgment is coming. Make haste, Lot get your children out of here.”** Look at that old man at midnight gray-haired, in the evening of his life, moving along through the streets of Sodom with his head down. What a night for Lot! Here is your man of influence. He goes to the house where those sons-in-law are. They are, perhaps, asleep. He raps. Someone opens the window, puts his head out and says, “Who is there?” “It is your father-in-law, Lot.” “What are you here for at this time of the night?” “I have got a couple of messengers from Heaven in my house and they have brought news from Heaven that God is going to destroy this city, and they want to have me get you out” and they laugh at him. His own sons-in-law mock him.

There is your worldly man. There is the man that has gone into the world to get influence over it, and his own children—there they are—and they mock him. He pleaded and undoubtedly wept over them, but it was all in vain. They mocked at his tears; they mocked at his entreaties. “Why, Sodom to be destroyed? Away with such a delusion. God going to fudge Sodom! We don’t believe it.” His own children didn’t believe it. We can see him going back to his house with a broken heart, head down, weeping. Early the next morning the angels had to take him by the hand and hasten him out of the city. Poor Lot! He lingered. Do you know why he lingered? Ah! his loved ones were there.

If there is any person on earth we ought to pity it is the father or mother who has led his children into the world and then can’t get them out. You lead them in and then when you try to lead them out they laugh at you and mock you. Oh, to live so that our children will believe our testimony! I tell you if I know my own heart I would rather be torn limb from limb on this platform—I would rather die, this moment—than to live so that my children do not have confidence in my testimony when I speak of Jesus Christ and the religion of the Bible. I tell you if you live a worldly life as Lot did down in Sodom that is going to be the result. The reaping time is coming, and we will have to reap the bitter fruit.

Look at poor Lot as he takes his wife and his two daughters and hastens out of the city. And his wife—no wonder she looked back. Those loved ones, those children were there.

Now, just take an inventory of what Lot lost. He lost his testimony, that is certain. There was not a Sodomite who would believe it; his own family would not. He lost his wife and all his children but two. He lost all his property. He lost his peace of mind. He lost the society of Abraham. He fell still lower out on the mountainside. The curtains drop, you might say, upon him, and he became the father of the backsliders. He became the father of a people who were afterward enemies of God. The bitter fruit of backsliding! That is the end of the worldly professor. Yet they lift up their heads in this city and tell you they are not spiritually minded people, and rather boast of it.

If you want to find out who is the successful man, you don't want to take a glimpse of him right in the middle of life, right in his prime, but take him from the cradle to the grave, and see what an influence the man leaves behind him. I will venture to say there are hundreds of men that would give all they have got if they could bury their influence in the grave with them. Their influence has been bad over their children and in the community. Now, if you are a poor Lot today, I beg of you to get out of Sodom.

Make haste! Don't linger any longer upon the plains, but start for Mount Calvary. Come back again and confess your sins, and ask God to forgive you, and then go to work and get your children out. Make haste! The judgment is coming.

Men may mock and scoff as long as they have a mind to, but up yonder sits a God of judgment. He is going to judge. He says He will do it, and He will do it. It is only a question of time. We might as well admit it as shut our eyes to it, and deny the fact that God is going to bring us to judgment; and if we live in the world, and like the world, and bring our children into the world, they are going to bring our gray hairs to an untimely grave. Many a father has gone before us, and many of them today are on the way.

Let us ask God to open our eyes, that we may see our true standing before God. It is a thousand times better to be like Abraham, out on the plains with a tent and an altar, in daily communion with God, than it is to be in Sodom with the honor of the whole city rolled at our feet. The honor of this world is so empty, so fleeting! It is not worth crossing the street for. Let us get the world and Sodom under our feet today, and let us set our faces like a flint toward the God of Abraham, and let us be content to live on the plains with the tent and altar, and serve our God until He calls us hence.

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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