

6 Who Controls Your Fate?

Gen. 14:1-13

Context: This text records the first war mentioned in the Bible. Eastern kings led by Shinar (modern day Iraq) attack the southern kings (including Sodom and Gomorrah) over the wealth of trade routes between Mesopotamia and Egypt. Sadly, Lot ends up in the middle of the battle.

Your friends determine your fate. If you don't believe it, look at your kids. The friends that your children choose determine their future. Let a child get in with the wrong group and you will have nothing but trouble. Friends influence children to alcohol, drugs and a host of other destructive habits. Let a child make friends in a good sports or music program where they are around well behaved children and they often stay out of trouble. It really is no different for adults. Adults who frequent the bars or hang around with people who have trouble holding down a job will be pulled down by their friends. Adults who spend a lot of time around strong Christians or have a set of friends with strong morals will be pulled up by these friends. Who you spend your life with will determine your fate.

This is the first battle mentioned in the Bible. Its importance is its strong connection to Abram and Lot. The five cities of the plains rebel against their masters, the four cities of the east. The armies from the east march out to wage war on the rebellious cities of the plains. In response, "*the king of Sodom . . . marched out and drew up their battle lines.*" (v.8) One would have expected that the five cities could defend themselves on their own turf, but they are routed and many fall into tar pits in the midst of their escape. The conquering army takes the goods and food of Sodom and Gomorrah as they depart. Such bounty was used to pay for and feed their troops. This is where this battle connects with the characters of the Bible.

Lot had moved from outside the city (13:12) to moving into the city (14:12). Now he would share their fate. Nothing in the text says that he went out into the battle, but "*They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions.*" (v.12) He would pay the price for their loss because he had now become one of them. Perhaps, he felt that he could separate himself from their evil and live among them, but not really become one of them. Whatever his thoughts, he had thrown his portion in with Sodom and now was reaping the fruit of his choices. The capture of Lot demonstrates that you will share the fate of those who you call friends.

At first, while the battle is raging in the valley below, Abram is living safely up in the hills of Palestine. "*Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre the Amorite.*" (v.13) The battle never threatens his flocks or his people. Having never allied himself with the people of Sodom, he and his people were safe up on the hill and were unaffected by the battle below. He had cast his portion with the Lord. He had avoided the lure of the evil cities. He had made alliances with some of the Amorites (14:13) for protection and trade, but had remained true to his God. Lot had desired the riches and the lifestyle of the world. Abram was content to live with his Lord.

Who do you associate with? No one can enter the house of the worldly and not be untouched. Their fate will affect your work, your family and your life. They may lure you in with their riches or excitement, but you will also share in their destiny. We cannot expect God to protect us from harm when we try to live in the wild animal's den. Abram was not isolated, but he did live apart from those who lived caustic lives in the valley below. We should try to help our neighbor, but we dare not live among them lest we become one of them. As we choose our friends and associates, we often choose our future. Those who cast their lot with the world will face the consequences that Lot faced.

One doubts that this story would have even been mentioned in scripture if Lot had lived with his flocks in the valley rather than in the city. The armies might have looted the city and not even known that Lot and his flocks were three or four miles away. The danger might have all passed him by as he lived outside the city and not in the middle of Sodom. We do have a choice. We can live safely in the hills with God or dare to live in the midst of evil. We all know people who have gotten into the wrong crowd and feel that life would be different if they had a different set of friends. As you think of your own life, consider how it would be blessed if you sought out Godly friends who could nurture you and help you

draw closer to the Lord. Our friends do have an effect on our fate. Godly friends lift us up and worldly friends can pull us down.

- Which of your friends tend to bring out the best in you? How could you develop those relationships so that they lift you even higher?