

**Splitting Hairs**  
By Jonathan L. Perz

Have you ever used or heard the phrase splitting hairs? This figure of speech indicates that one is meticulous, picky, or even ridiculously petty. It is true that people can get carried away 'reading into' scripture—binding things that God has not bound. However, if we are not careful, we can lose things that God has not loosed. As Christians, we must pay attention to even the smallest details in God's word when it comes to matters of faith (**Jude 3, 2 Tim. 3:16-17**). In other words, we had better split some hairs!

failing to glorify God before Israel. Water gushed out and the children of Israel drank. Yet later, God told Moses that because he "believed Him not," Moses would not enter the promised land.

Speak? Smote? What is the difference? Did not the water still gush forth? Is this a matter of "splitting hairs?" In our eyes it might seem petty, but in the sight of God, it is not! To truly understand the lesson, we must acknowledge what Moses' unbelief in this little matter cost him—entrance into the promised land.

For Christians today, seeking the promised land of heaven, we must acknowledge that God is no respecter of persons. Our unbelief in little matters might cost us the promised land. We must believe that God means exactly what He says, and says exactly what He means—even if we must split hairs to obey Him! Credit:www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦

Scripture clearly illustrates the need for us to heed the details of God's instructions. Read **Numbers 20:1-13**. This tells of Moses and why God did not allow him to enter the promised land. During Israel's wanderings there was a shortage of water. Moses beseeched God and was commanded to "speak to the rock" that it would gush water for the children of Israel. Instead of "speaking" to the rock as God commanded, Moses "smote" the rock with his rod—

**What Must I Do To Be Saved?**

- Hear and Learn - **Rom. 10:17** m. **10:9-10** ; **1 Pet. 3:21** ; **John 6:45; 17:3**
- Believe - **Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24**
- Repent - **Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30**
- Confess the Lord - **Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21**
- Be Baptized - **Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27**
- Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - **Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17**

**The Voice of Truth**

February 6, 2011

**"Charges to Christians"**  
By Jimmy Pettigrew

One of the real problems of Christianity is a lack of dedicated service to Christ. You must serve Christ zealously and faithfully. Living the Christian life is pictured in the New Testament as: warfare (**Eph. 6:10-18**), an athletic event (**1 Cor. 9:24-26; Gal. 5:7**). A good start, so important in a race, does not insure a successful finish. Christians need to remember these charges for running the Christian race.

wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on" (**Prov. 4:14-15**).

(1) "...stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (**1 Cor. 16:13**). Paul exhorts the Corinthians to stand fast. Meaning, stand fast in the truth (**Jno. 17:17**), God's word (**Psa. 119:9**), the New Testament (**2 Cor. 3:6**), the gospel of Christ (**Rom. 1:16**), the doctrine or teaching of Christ (**2 Jno. 9**). This is the urgency needed by all saints! We must prove our worth as a soldier of Christ and fight the spiritual warfare that Christians must wage! Stand fast in the faith, always be eager to defend (**1 Pet. 3:15**) and contend (**Jude 3**). Stand for things which Christ stood for, stand for the things which Christ died for, stand and ask for the old paths (**Jer. 6:16**).

(3) "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (**Jno. 14:15**). This says in effect, that love for the Lord is evidenced in keeping His commandments. If you'll keep on loving Me, you'll keep my commandments. "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keep-eth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (**1 Jno. 2:3-5**). "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (**Jno. 15:9-10**). This love for God is not simply an emotion. It is a disposition that seeks the glory of God. It is an attitude of submission to His will. It is the desire to do His bidding! Love is not only obeying commands; it is having them! "He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him" (**Jno. 14:21**). Love **MUST** be expressed in obedience! Such glorifies the Son and thus, glorifies the Father. Do you love the Father? Do your actions show that you do?

(2) "Abstain from every form of evil" (**1 Thess. 5:22**). When one has learned what is good or true, and what is evil and false, he should hold fast the true and abstain from the evil. In **1 Timothy 6:11-12**, follow a discourse on a number of evils and the disastrous results that come upon those that follow such things. Paul addresses Timothy as a "man of God", indicating that he is one who is committed to God in this life. In view of the evils just mentioned (**1 Timothy 6**), Paul urges Timothy to "flee these things" (**vs. 11**). There are times when running is not cowardly, but wise. It is absurdity, foolishness and madness to remain in the presence of temptation needlessly. It is not wisdom to deliberately place one's soul in jeopardy. When Joseph was approached by the wife of Potiphar for the purpose of fornication, Joseph fled the scene completely. We cannot always avoid temptations, but we do not have to remain in their presence. "Do not enter the path of the

(4) "...Be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living" (**1 Pet. 1:15**). We are encouraged to live lives of complete dedication to God. As the song we sing, we need to:

Take time to be Holy,  
speak oft with thy Lord;  
Abide in Him always,  
And feed on His word.

Are we taking time to be holy when we want worship

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About the Hillcrest church of Christ		
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Telephone: (920)499-5677 E-mail: hillcrestcofc@live.com  	1621 Hillcrest Drive Green Bay, WI 54313 	Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm* <small>*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month</small>
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services shortened? Or, when we want the sermon not to be over twenty minutes? We want the prayers short, the songs few. What's the big hurry? Are we in a hurry to visit the sick and erring after services? No, we want to go to a restaurant and eat a delicious meal, watch TV or whatever we desire. If the Lord's Supper is served first, some brethren will partake of it and leave on a trip the minute after

## "Pitching Your Tent Toward Sodom"

By Jarrod Jacobs

In the long ago, two men had a problem. Their combined wealth, livestock, etc., was so large that their servants were at odds with one another (**Gen. 13:1-7**). Yes, Abram and Lot had been greatly blessed by God with physical goods, so much so that, *"the land was not able to bear them."* Thus, a change was necessary. Abram's suggestion was, *"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left"* (**Gen. 13:8-9**).

Lot agreed to Abram's suggestion and, *"lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom"* (**Gen. 13:10-12**).

It is from the last phrase in **Genesis 13:12** that I take the title of our article. Those familiar with how the rest of Lot's life turned out, would no doubt agree that this time was a "pivotal point" in his life. Had Lot not left Abram, or had he told Abram to choose, etc., his life might have gone a lot differently.

This text teaches us some valuable lessons (**Rom. 15:4**). "Pitching your tent (spiritually) toward Sodom" can have terrible consequences. Please consider the following and learn from Lot's mistakes....

### Appearances Can Be Deceiving.

In reading **Genesis 13**, we see that when the strife

they partake! Is this taking time to be holy, or is this taking time for our own desires? We need to forget the cares of the world and take time to be holy! We should study God's word and pray every day.

The truth of God has been placed in the care of those who love the Lord. It is an awesome responsibility, so let us handle it aright, love it, obey it, live it and stand fast for it! ♦

came up between Abram and Lot, he had a choice to make. Does he go to the plains or the mountains? Looking toward Sodom (south side of Dead Sea) was the only place that was not mountainous in that region at the time. (Holman Bible Dictionary, p. 346). Therefore, to go into this well-watered plain meant an easier time caring for the livestock and slaves, not to mention his own family.

Sodom and Gomorrah were a part of the five "cities of the plain" (**Gen. 13:12**). So, to go toward Sodom meant not only a "well-watered plain", but also the ability to trade and sell with neighbors! With all these things being available, how could it be wrong? Yet, it was, wasn't it? Let us learn a lesson from Lot and make sure we do not pitch our tent toward Sodom nor be deceived by outward appearances!

Let us not allow a "good job" to take us away from the service of the Lord (possibly our family too, **Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 6:4**). Let us not allow financial "security", a "good pension," paid vacations, and the like lure us away from spiritual matters and what is most important! Jesus said, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (**Matt. 6:33**).

Similarly, let us not allow recreation to turn us away from the Lord. Sadly, there are many in our society who will neglect and forsake God's word in order to engage in some recreational pursuit (**Heb. 10:25**). Sometimes, folks are heard saying, "Sunday is my only day off!" Or, "I have a lot of fun, and God would want me to have fun and relax wouldn't He?" Let us ask it this way: "Would Jesus be making up such excuses to get out of worshipping God?" All that we do and say must be in keeping with the authority of Christ (**Col. 3:17**).

Let us be careful of our words and actions. Friends,

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appearances can be deceiving!

### Prosperity Does Not Mean You Are Right With God.

Many people make the false assumption that if you have been blessed physically in some way, then this means you are also acceptable spiritually with God. While this CAN be true (ex: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, **I Tim. 6:17-19**; etc.), this observation is not always true (**Lk. 9:58; Heb. 11:37-38; Matt. 19:27**; etc.).

Remember the description of the land near Sodom, Gomorrah, and the nearby cities? It was a very rich land (**Gen. 13:10-11**). Yet, the people inhabiting it were very wicked (**Gen. 13:13**). Yes, these folks were able to enjoy God's bounty; but it is not because God was pleased with their actions! No, earthly prosperity is not an indication that God is pleased with you!

This is a lesson Asaph learned in **Psalms 73**. When this man looked about and saw how the wicked were so prosperous (**v. 3-12**), he decided that he was wasting his time in obeying God (**v. 13-16**). He had the wrong idea, didn't he? Yet, his attitude toward wicked people, prosperity, and the like changed when he went to worship God (**v. 17**). He said he finally understood that their earthly prosperity was all they had (**v. 18-28**). They had no hope, no relationship with God, and when this life was over, they lost it all!

We need to see this as well. Earthly prosperity has no relation to our eternal salvation. Jesus makes it clear that God sends the sun and rain to both the just and the unjust (**Matt. 5:45**). In fact, many times it is those who are right with God that suffer the most (see: **Heb. 10-11**). This is because the world tends to reward their friends, and harm their enemies (**Jn. 15:19**)!

Yet, Christians are not discouraged by this because we have something better to look forward to (**II Cor. 4:16-5:4**).

### Being Around The Wrong People Can Get You In Trouble.

As we know, the events surrounding Lot and Sodom did not end in **Genesis 13**. In fact, we learn that not long after Lot "pitched his tent toward Sodom" (**Gen. 13:12**) he and his family then went on to live "in Sodom" (**Gen. 14:12**). This close association proved harmful to Lot and his family as they were taken captive as prisoners of war. Upon hearing this news, Abram and 318 armed servants went and risked their lives in order to rescue Lot and his family from

their captors (**Gen. 14:11-16**).

On yet another occasion, Lot's association with Sodom again jeopardized himself and his family. On this occasion, only he and two daughters would be spared the wrath of God when He rained down fire and brimstone (**Gen. 19**).

Thus it is today. Our associations can get us into trouble and can jeopardize our souls if we are not careful! We are warned on many occasions about what our associations can do. For example, **I Corinthians 15:33** warns us not to be deceived because *"evil companionships corrupt good morals"*. In **II John 9-11**, we are told that to bid a false teacher "godspeed" is to partake of (be in fellowship with) his evil deeds!

Yes, being around the wrong people can get us and those we love into trouble (**Rom. 14:7**)! Both young and old need to learn this lesson! Just as Lot's association with Sodom endangered his life, and others, our associations can endanger our eternal lives, and those we influence. Remember, Christ called His people "salt" and "light" for a reason (**Matt. 5:13-16**)! Rather than falling into Satan's trap of being associated with the wrong people, why not use your influence for good and help others do what is right?

### Conclusion

Dear one, can you see the danger of pitching your tent toward Sodom? Lot went from merely looking on ground he thought was good to finally losing his family, and fathering his own grandchildren (**Gen. 19:30-38**). Please take note of the fact that this did not happen instantly upon reaching the Plain! He did not start out living in Sodom with his daughters and sons marrying those of Sodom, etc. This took several years of compromises, and the continued influence of evil people upon him and his family. This was a slow, steady, subtle slide, not unlike what happens with many today who go down the road to destruction (**Matt. 7:13-14**).

Knowing this is the case, let us hear and fear! Let us learn from the experience of Lot and his family. Remember, he started in the "plain"! Slowly over time, the wickedness crept in. This is no different for men today. We might start out "pitching our tents toward Sodom," but in a while, we will be living there, and not know how it happened if we are not careful! *"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"* (**I Cor. 5:6**). Credit: [www.southside-churchofchrist.com](http://www.southside-churchofchrist.com) ♦