

GENESIS 12-13

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Genesis chapter 12 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Before we get to our text this evening, let me share this summary of what we have been looking at with you. We are told,

“If the other planets are inhabited,” quipped George Bernard Shaw, “then they must be using the earth for their insane asylum.”

We may chuckle at that statement, but it reminds us of a sad fact: The world is in a mess, and it does not seem to be getting any better. What is wrong?

It all goes back to events recorded in the Book of Genesis.

Except for the account in chapters 1 and 2, the first eleven chapters of Genesis record one failure of man after another, failures that are being repeated today.

The first man and woman disobeyed God and were cast out of the Garden (chap. 3).

Cain murdered his brother Abel and lied about it (chap. 4).

Humanity became so corrupt that God cleansed the earth with a flood (chaps. 6-8).

Noah got drunk and exposed himself to his son Ham (chap. 9).

In their defiance of God, men built a city and a tower; and God had to send confusion to end the rebellion (chap. 10).

Disobedience, murder, deception, drunkenness, nudity, and rebellion sound pretty up-to-date, don't they? If you were God, what would you do with these sinners, men and women you had created in your own image?

“I’d probably destroy them!” you might reply; but that’s not what God did. Instead, God called a man and his wife to leave their home and go to a new land, so that He might give humanity a new beginning. Because of God’s call and their obedient faith.

Abraham and Sarah ultimately gave to the world the Jewish nation, the Bible, and the Savior.

Where would we be today if Abraham and Sarah had not trusted God?

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – OT*, p. 57

Keep in mind that what God is doing is fulfilling or working out His promise He made to Adam and Eve that through the seed of the woman the Savior would come.

And all we know now is that God is working through Abram, a Gentile idol worshiper who heard the call of God and followed where the Lord was leading him, into a land he had never been before. It was a walk of faith!

As we concluded last time, Abram received this call of God to the land of Canaan, but he stopped in Haran and dwelt there until his father, Terah died. It was obedience, but only partial obedience on the part of Abram at this point.

Remember that man has moved so far away from God that they are worshiping anything and everything that they want except the true and living God. But, like I have said, Abram is called by God, and he walks by faith!

That is what Paul tells us in that hall of faith portion of Hebrews. He wrote of Abraham in Hebrews 11:8-10, **“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”**

We might laugh at how the faith of Abraham waxed and waned, but he did walk and maybe God is calling you this evening to do something, to take some steps of faith and you are afraid to do it. You are stalling.

The lesson here is that we all need to walk by faith and trust what the Lord is telling us to do no matter how difficult it may be!

Abram was called, and he went by faith to the land of Promise, the land of Canaan and he was ultimately waiting for that new city in which he would dwell with God in, and we await that day as well.

Again, as we pick up our study this evening, Abram is in Haran and now his father has died and once again we will see God calling Abram to go forward, to go into the land of Canaan.

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Genesis chapter 12, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

GENESIS 12**VERSES 1-3**

As you read this it seems that God is calling Abram a second time to leave his past ways behind and to begin a new life, walking in obedience to the Lord. And He is as we saw the first calling in Genesis chapter 11 and Stephen, in the New Testament, as he is speaking to the Jewish religious leaders, makes that same point in Acts chapter 7, that Abram stalled in Haran until his father, Terah had died.

What is the point for us?

Just like it was for Abram, to separate from the world!

I think we understand this, we just don't apply it to our lives, and we end up in trouble. You see, as Christians the Lord has told us to separate from the world in the sense that we are not to have that intimate fellowship with them as we do with believers. You see, they will not love the same things as we do, they will do things that we won't do and instead of bringing them up, they will bring us down.

Paul spoke about this in II Corinthians 6:14-18, **“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.”** May we heed the warning and come out from this world and come to Christ, follow Him!

So Abram is told once again to walk by faith.

Here’s the thing. Did Abram’s partial obedience to the Lord end God’s promise?

No, in a sense it was just put on hold and now, as Terah is gone, God calls Abram to walk by faith, not to let things get in the way to prevent him from walking. And keep in mind that he did not own any part of the land God told him was his, it was all based upon faith, based upon God’s promise to him so he walked.

Paul picked upon this in Galatians 3:6-9, **“just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’ So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.”**

Just as Abram believed God, or Abraham as he would be called, and walked by faith, so must we!

Remember back in Genesis chapter 11 and how we saw the plans of man, that tower of Babel, that ended with confusion and chaos.

Now, here in Genesis chapter 12 we see the plan of God, the promises of God that will and has come to pass! It is a covenant that God made with Abraham.

What are these promises that God gave to Abram? Listen carefully because what God has promised here many are negating today and that is a dangerous place to be, in opposition to God's Word and His people as we will see.

- ***I will make you a great nation*** – Keep in mind that Abram had no children at this point in his life and yet God promised that a nation would be born from him – the nation of Israel!
- ***I will make your name great*** – Father Abraham is honored by the Jewish people, Christians and even Muslims.
- ***I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you*** – How true that is, and we can look back and see that played out in nations that have come against Israel.

Listen to what Barnhouse tells us as he writes: ***“When the Greeks overran Palestine [Israel] and desecrated the altar in the Jewish temple, they were soon conquered by Rome. When Rome killed Paul and many others, and destroyed Jerusalem under Titus, Rome soon fell. Spain was reduced to a fifth-rate nation after the Inquisition against the Jews; Poland fell after the pogroms [massacres]; Hitler’s Germany went down after its orgies of anti-Semitism; Britain lost her empire when she broke her faith with Israel.”***

And we can see what has happened here in America when we try and come against the nation of Israel. Remember the Perfect Storm that occurred on October 30, 1991. President George H. W. Bush opened the Madrid (Spain) Conference to consider ***“land for peace”*** in Israel’s Middle East role, the ***“perfect storm”*** develops in the North Atlantic, creating the largest waves ever recorded in that region. The storm travels 1000 miles from “east to west” instead of the normal “west to east” pattern and crashes into the New England Coast. Thirty-five-foot waves crash into the Kennebunkport home of President Bush.

Maybe a coincidence? There are no coincidences with God!

Back on January 16, 1994, when President Bill Clinton met with Syria's President Hafez el-Assad in Geneva, they talked about a peace agreement with Israel that includes giving up the Golan Heights. Within 24 hours, a powerful 6.9 earthquake rocks Southern California. This quake, centered in Northridge, becomes the second most destructive natural disaster to hit the United States, behind Hurricane Andrew!

I will give you one more, and there are many more. On September 28, 1998 Secretary of State Albright works on the final details of an agreement in which Israel would give up 13 percent of Yesha (Judah and Samaria). It is then that Hurricane George slams into the United States Gulf Coast with 110 mph winds and gusts up to 175 mph. The hurricane hits the coast and stalls.

On that same day, Clinton meets with Yasser Arafat and Netanyahu at the White House to finalize this land deal. Later, Arafat addresses the United Nations about declaring an independent Palestinian state by May 1999, as Hurricane George pounds the Gulf Coast, causing \$1 billion in damage. At the exact time that Arafat departs the country, the storm begins to dissipate.

God clearly said, **"I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you"**

and we need to heed those words!

- *In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed* – How true that is for through the seed of the woman, through the Jewish people, the Messiah has come and through Jesus we are all blessed! Paul points this out to us in Galatians chapter 3 as he tells us, **"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.' So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. . . . Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ."** Galatians 3:8-9, 16.

Not only that, but for Abram and his descendants, they will be . . .

- *A witness of God's ways* – In Isaiah 49:6 we are told, **"Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.'"** They were to point people to the true and living God, to the ways of God and we, as Christians are to do the same!
- *A keeper of God's Word* – In Romans 3:1-2 we are told, **"What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God."** God's Word, written through the Jewish people and the integrity of the Scriptures kept pure as God wrote these words through the Jewish people. For us as Christians, God has given to us His Word and we too are to protect it, keep it pure, not change what God has said!

- *A channel for God's wonder* – In Isaiah 9:6 we are told, “**For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**” As people looked at the Jewish people, they saw the power of God working in them and through them, how God preserved these people and provided for them. As Christians people should see us and see the power of God working in us and through us!

Let's read on and see how Abram or Abraham responds to this calling of God.

VERSE 4

God told Abram to separate from his family, but he brings his nephew Lot along with him and it will cause some problems down the road.

Also, keep in mind that Abram is seventy-five years old at this point and has no children. How in the world is he going to be the father of a great nation, you need children for that! With God, when He makes a promise to us, He is more than able to bring it to pass no matter how impossible it may seem. Never forget that.

VERSES 5-6

So Abram arrives in the land of Canaan, but traveling with him, like I have said, is his nephew Lot.

Not only that, but we see with all the time he spent in Haran, he gathered a lot of people there and they too are going with him!

VERSES 7-9

As Abram is obedient to the Lord, the Lord reminds him of the promises He made to him. All that land was his even though he didn't own any of it. In fact, the only parcel of land he would come to own would be a burial plot for his family. (Genesis 23:14-20)

Everything else was a walk by faith believing in the promises of God.

And what does Abram do there? He worships the Lord, offering a sacrifice to Him because he loved the Lord and for the promises that God gave to him.

As Abram pitched his tent, Bethel or the house of God was to the west and Ai or heap or dump was to the east.

As you read this doesn't it speak of our pilgrimage in this world? I think it does. You see, we are moving from ruin (the old life) towards the house of God (heaven).

And when we turn around, we are heading back to the dump, or it will ruin our lives. May we listen to the Lord and follow Him and not go back to what the world has for us, which is never good!

Not only that but Abram lived in a tent! What is a tent?

A tent is a temporary dwelling place, and we see that is all Abram had, he did not own a house in this land! But why?

Because he was just passing through, he was a pilgrim and he was ultimately looking to the heavenly city, one not built with hands as Paul told us back in Hebrews chapter 11, verses we have read already.

Let me share this with you from John Bunyan's classic work *Pilgrim's Progress*. In this portion of the book they are going through *Vanity Fair* to get to the *Celestial City*. It is a place that represents all the temptations that the world has to offer a person.

And this is what we are told, *“The pilgrims were clothed with such kind of raiment as was diverse from the raiment of any that traded in that fair. The people, therefore, of the fair made a great gazing upon them. Some said they were fools, some they were Bedlams (lunatics), and some they are outlandish men. . . . Few could understand what they said. They naturally spoke the language of Canaan (the Promised Land), but they that kept the fair were the men of this world, so that, from one end of the fair to the other, they seemed barbarians each to each other. . . . But that which did not a little amuse the merchandizers was, that these pilgrims set very light by all their wares. They cared not so much as to look upon them, and if they called upon them to buy, they would put their fingers in their ears, and cry, ‘Turn away mine eyes from beholding Vanity,’ and look upwards, signifying that their trade and traffic was in heaven.”*

One commentator summed it up like this for us. He wrote,

Here are three marks of the pilgrim: He wears different clothing, he speaks a different language, he holds different values. By the first, Bunyan meant that the believer is clothed in Christ’s righteousness rather than in his own self-righteousness. By the second, he meant that the followers of Christ speak often of him and his concerns. By the third, he meant that the world has lost its appeal for those whose eyes are set on God’s glory.

- Jim Boice

In the same way Abram was a pilgrim whose life was characterized by these same things. And for us as Christians, we are pilgrims passing through this world, it is not our home. We are to be clothed differently, we speak differently as we share Christ and we have lost our appetite for the things of this world, at least that is the direction we should be moving in as we go from Ai to Bethel!

VERSE 10

Why did God allow this famine to come into the land?

This was a test of faith for Abram!

What do I mean by that?

Will he trust in the Lord to provide for him, or will he try to take care of the situation on his own?

He, like us many times, tried to take care of the situation on his own and thus, we are told that he **“went down to Egypt.”**

You see, when you are not obeying the Lord, trusting in Him, you are only going - ***DOWN!***

And keep in mind that Egypt is a type of the world and thus, instead of trusting God, Abram went down into the world for help! What a lesson for us to learn from.

Now you may be thinking that ***“Why was this so wrong? Famines were bad and people died, so he was only trying to protect his family, right?”***

The problem was that he did not trust God and like we are told in Isaiah 31:1, **“Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, And rely on horses, Who trust in chariots because they are many, And in horsemen because they are very strong, But who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, Nor seek the Lord!”**

And please understand that when you look to the world for help, you will always take something away with you that is not good, and we will see that here with Abram. He is going to compromise his integrity by lying and he is going to take with him a slave girl named Hagar who will be a source of trouble for his family as we will see.

VERSES 11-13

Abram is concerned about his wife’s beauty and how the people down in Egypt might not only take her from him, but they may kill him!

Thus, he wants her to tell them a half-truth, that she is his sister. The fact is that she was his half-sister, (Genesis 20:12). But it was still a lie, and he was not trusting in the Lord, this was his plan to save his own neck!

Now, could Abram justify his actions?

You bet he could, but it still does not make it right.

Folks, we do the same thing, and it is still wrong if we are lying or doing something that goes contrary to the Word of God. There is no justification for it.

Thus, walk by faith, trust in the Lord, don’t walk by sight coming up with ways to help God out!

You see, God promised Abram he would be a great nation, he had no children yet, thus, God would have to protect him until the promise was fulfilled. Again, walking by faith!

VERSES 14-15

Look at what happened because he did not trust the Lord. He went down to Egypt, he lied about his wife and now his wife was being given to Pharaoh! The consequences of disobedience!

VERSES 16-20

Please take note of this. Abram was blessed by the world, by Pharaoh for his actions, but not by God. And what the world blesses with and what God blesses with do not compare.

Notice that God has to intervene to protect Sarai, something that her husband should have been doing being the spiritual leader of the family, but he was too busy reaping the rewards of his lies!

Think about this for a minute. It took a pagan King to rebuke this man of God, Abram for his actions.

Folks, it is never a good thing when the world exposes our sin. It is better to repent and get right with God. But make no mistake about it, if we don't, your sin will be exposed!

And like I have said, and something we need to take heed. Don't think that time spent in the world won't affect you, it will.

Abram, as he left Egypt, as he left the world to go back to the land God wanted him in; he took with him some baggage that would be a thorn in his side and in the side of the Jewish people.

He picked up a maidservant for his wife and her name was Hagar, like I have said.
(Genesis 16:1-2)

When we go into the world it will affect us and those around us because you can't leave without taking something with you!

Now for some, they think that they blew it with God and God is done with them. If that were true none of us would ever be used by God!

God is not done with Abram. He will continue to grow his faith as He does ours.

Is this walk of faith easy?

Absolutely not, but apart from these testing's our faith would never grow!

It is as Barnhouse said, "***Faith is not a mushroom that grows overnight in damp soil; it is an oak tree that grows for a thousand years under the blast of wind and rain.***"

How true that is.

Thus, don't run to the world; don't run away from faith, but walk by faith and see where the Lord is leading you as He led Abram and your faith will grow!

As we continue on into Genesis chapter 13 this evening, we are going to see how gracious God is as we walk by faith.

Alexander Whyte put it like this; "***The Christian life is basically a series of new beginnings.***"

I am so grateful for that, aren't you? I bet you are as well. Let's see the lessons God has for us as we get into Genesis chapter 13 this evening!

GENESIS 13**VERSES 1-4**

Did Abram blow it by going down to Egypt?

Yes, he did. But as we have seen, God did not give up on him. But Abram had to respond, and he does as we see that he returned to the place that God called him to in the first place, he returned to the land of promise and there he worshiped the Lord!

Remember, he went **DOWN** to Egypt for help instead of trusting in the Lord. He looked to the world for help instead of the Lord.

But now he goes **UP**, he returns to his first love, he goes back to the house of God!

I find it interesting that when believers go into the world, when they sin, the Devil convinces them that the house of God is the last place they should go, and they listen to his lies!

God wanted Abram to return and when he did, he was starting over again, but he was where God wanted him to be.

If you are in that place of walking from the Lord, won't you return to Him, obey His voice, return to the house of the Lord, that place of fellowship with Him? You need to!

Listen to what the Lord said in Jeremiah 4:1, **“If you will return, O Israel,’ says the LORD, ‘Return to Me; And if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, Then you shall not be moved.’”**

God wants to do the same with those who have strayed away from Him! Allow them to return and be part of the fellowship, if they repent of their sin!

We have talked about this already, but I will ask you this question. ***“Did Abram gain anything when he was down in Egypt?”***

Well, according to Genesis 12:16 we are told, **“He [Pharaoh] treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.”**

He obtained great wealth in Egypt; it seems that he was blessed.

Yes, he may have been blessed by the world, but not by God! You see, he wasted his time down in Egypt, in the world, out of the will of God. Just because he obtained all this wealth in Egypt, it does not justify his actions.

God could have and would have supplied all his needs, if he would have just walked by faith and not by sight.

We too need to be careful that we don't let the end justify the means or what we gain is not always justified by our actions!

And folks, there is always a cost to pay in our disobedience to the Lord. Like I have said, Abram picked up a maidservant for his wife by the name of Hagar who will become a thorn in his side and the side of his people!

VERSES 5-7

Here we see strife between Abram and Lot. But this should not have happened?

Why?

Remember what God told Abram back in Genesis 12:1, **“... ‘Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you.’”**

Did Abram obey the Lord fully on this one?

No, he didn't. Abram brought his nephew Lot with him, and a conflict arose between them.

As their livestock grew the land could not support them both and there was tension between the herdsmen of Abram and the herdsmen of Lot.

Now let me say this, strife is not always a bad thing. We can allow it to get bad but think about it, “**iron sharpens iron**” and we keep each other sharp by challenging each other. But we can let it go too far and that is not a good thing. (Proverbs 27:17)

Here it seems that the wealth both Abram and Lot brought back from Egypt was the cause of the strife as the land wasn't able to sustain the livestock that they each possessed.

Now why does the Lord mention the Canaanites and the Perizzites who dwelt in the land?

Because this issue between Abram and Lot was not the only thing that they were dealing with. You see, it was also their witness to the unbelieving people of Canaan.

Lot was a believer as was Abram but as we will see, Lot is tempted by the things of this world, he will walk by sight and not by faith!

And now this fight, this quarrel, this strife that could have grown and gotten ugly, but it didn't because of the wisdom and humility of Abram, as we will see. If it did grow into a battle, it would have ruined their witness

Once again I am amazed at the number of Christians that fight, that quarrel, that bicker, that argue and-so-on.

And the thing is, they see nothing wrong with their actions, they can justify their actions. And as the world looks on and sees and hears these things, they see no difference between them and us.

In fact, Barnhouse said, “*Many people will never listen to what any believer says because of what some believers are.*”

Paul put it like this in Ephesians 4:32, “**And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**”

That is not a suggestion. Does that mean it is always fair, it is always right? Obviously not, but don't use that to justify your wrong actions!

Paul, in II Corinthians 3:2-6 wrote, “**You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**”

In other words, we might be the only Bible some people read! Our lives, how we get along, how we live out our faith can be a tremendous witness to the world drawing people to the Lord or a terrible witness to the world pushing people away from the Lord.

David said in Psalm 133:1, “**Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!**”

How true that is, that brethren should dwell together in unity because there is more that unites us than divides us and our actions are a witness of our faith to others!

VERSES 8-9

Now let's take a closer look at this situation, this strife between the herdsman of Abram and the herdsman of Lot.

Their herds grew so much that the land was not able to hold both of them and what was going to happen here?

Think about this. Abram was the elder and God gave the land to him. Thus, he could have said to Lot, ***“Take a hike boy, you bother me! This land is my land, not your land! From the Negev desert to the Lebanon boarder, this land was made for just me!”*** Sorry about that one.

In fact, God had given him this land and thus, to try and help God out Abram could have told Lot that this is what he was taking, and Lot could have another area.

But Abram didn't do that because he let love flow. He told Lot to take what he wanted, and he would take the other portion.

Please don't miss this. Back in Egypt Abram thought he had to take his fate into his own hands. He had to look out for himself.

But now, in this situation, his faith is growing. He was wiser and was willing to let God look out for his interests.

And this growth, his faith in this situation was all because he trusted in God. He did not have to be obsessed with his own rights, and neither do we. Everything we receive is the free gift of God and has nothing to do with our concept of rights.

As Christians there are times when we demand our rights. Here's the thing, the only right we have is to go to Hell, and everything else is a free gift of God! And when you live with that perspective, you can let love flow from your life!

If you struggle with this, listen to what our Lord did out of love.

In Philippians 2:5-8 we are told, **“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”**

The Creator of heaven and earth humbled Himself, freely let go of some of His Godly attributes that He might enter a body of flesh to die for our sins!

And Paul said that this mind that was in Christ, let it be in you also, not looking out for your own personal interests, but for the wellbeing of others!

Now when we speak of this *AGAPE* love or this unconditional love that the Lord shows to us, it may be difficult to grasp it.

What does this kind of love mean? How can we explain it?

I think Paul nails it for us. He gives to us the definition of what *AGAPE* love is all about. And he speaks of this right in the middle of a section in I Corinthians that deals with spiritual gifts, why?

Because there in Corinth the gifts were exercised not in love but for their own popularity, the notoriety of the individual.

But listen to what Paul said in I Corinthians chapter 13, starting in verse 1, as he tells us, **“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. . . . And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”** I Corinthians 13:1-8a, 13.

Paul is saying that if all you do for the Lord is done without love, it is meaningless to Him.

In fact, I believe it will be detrimental not only for you, but to those around you.

Thus, let love flow as Abram is showing us here!

And as we read on, we shall see how God will honor him for his love towards Lot; he is not going to lose out on anything!

VERSES 10-13

As you read these verses and look specifically at Genesis 13:10, what was the problem that Lot had here?

It says that **“ . . . Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of the Jordan . . . ”**

So what is wrong with that?

For Lot, he only lifted up his eyes so far, to see the beauty of the land, and make no mistake about it, it was beautiful. This is before judgment came upon it. (Genesis 13:10)

But he stopped there and did not lift his eyes up to the Lord to be directed by Him.

Let's face it, we can look at things and think they are very good, or the situation is the right one to go forward on. But we have limited eyesight and thus, we can be very wrong, and I am sure we have been very wrong before.

The Lord is all-knowing and thus, He has what is best for us, but we must look to Him. You see, our heart is wicked or as Jeremiah put it in Jeremiah 17:9, "**The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?**"

Before we do anything, we need to bring it to the Lord because, as Jeremiah goes on to say in Jeremiah 17:10, "**I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.**"

The Lord tests our heart, He makes sure our motives are right, that we are doing the right thing for the right reasons and for Lot, it looked beautiful and yet, there was trouble there in Sodom as we read.

Remember what the Lord told David in Psalm 32:8-9. He said, "**I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be like the horse or like the mule, Which have no understanding, Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you.**"

You see, keep your eyes on the Lord, be in fellowship with Him and let Him guide you!

And, like I have said, this land Lot is moving to was beautiful, it was lush, it had a lot to offer.

Thus, walking by sight showed that this was the place to be, but we are not to walk by sight but by faith.

You see, the land was filled with wickedness, immorality that would not only affect Lot, but his family, as we will see in our study of Genesis.

Listen again to what we read in Genesis 13:13, “**But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD.**”

Notice, their actions were against the Lord, and it was manifested in the things that they were doing, and we will dig into that more as we continue on here in Genesis next time.

And here’s the thing. Living in Sodom affected Lot as Peter tells us in II Peter 2:7-8, as he wrote, “**and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds).**”

Did you see that? Lot *SAW*, he *COVETED*, and then he *TOOK* this land for himself.

It is the warning that John gives to us in I John 2:15-17, “**Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.**”

That is where Lot was at, and he gave into this temptation, and it tormented him and his family!

We need to be careful where we are placing ourselves, the situations we put ourselves in, the things we go after because it will not only affect us but our family and friends!

For Lot, he starts out by looking towards Sodom, he then pitches his tent towards Sodom, and finally, as time goes by, he is a leader in the government of Sodom, sitting at the city gate!

Folks, be careful in this area, don't walk by sight but by faith no matter how things may look outwardly.

Listen to the Lord!

VERSES 14-16

As Lot separates from Abram, God once again reminds Abram of His promise to him, that all this land is his even though Abram gave some of it to Lot. God tells Abram it is still his.

Now, we may see these steps of faith that Abram is making are small, but to walk you need to put one foot in front of the other and that is exactly what Abram is doing here – walking by faith. That is what the Lord wants us to do, to take those steps, one foot at a time!

And please understand that men and women of faith can stumble, they can fall, they can fail, and we will see that with Abram as he will once again try to help God out and that never works for Abram's good or our good when we try to do that.

Don't lose hope, God will continue to work in us so that He can work through us!

Ray Stedman summed it up like this for us. He wrote,

Lot had lifted up his eyes and chosen for himself; now God says to the man of faith, living in his tent on the hillside, "Abram, lift up your eyes." Where? Everywhere - to the north, the south, the east (the portion Lot chose), and the west. All the land is his!

This land is consistently the symbol for us of the fullness of life in the Spirit of God; the life of joy, power, love, and glory; the life of refreshing ministry to others.

Surely this is what Paul longs for us when he prays, “That you may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God,” (Ephesians 3:18-19 RSV).

This is all yours, if you are willing to let God make the choices of life for you.

Lot will never know this! Nor will we, if we make our choices on the basis of what we see, relating to the materialistic, commercial standards of those about us.

But if, like Abram, we are content to have what God gives us in life, all the fullness of Christ will be ours.

Paul says in First Corinthians 3:21b-23 (RSV): “For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.”

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Exactly. This life is a walk of faith, and it begins the moment we get saved and ends the moment we go home to be with the Lord, our journey has ended then!

Now as you look at Genesis 13:16 and the promise to Abram on how his descendants would be like the dust of the earth in number, how many children did Abram have at this time?

He had ***ZERO!***

Here again is a promise of God that was given to Abram as he dwelt in the Ur of the Chaldeans and once again in Haran. (Acts 7:2-4, Genesis 12:1-3)

Abram is at least 75 years old at this point and God tells him that his descendants are going to be as the dust of the earth! Give me a break!

Here's the thing and something we need to remember. By sight, this was totally impossible! But by faith, it is very possible.

It is as the angel said to Mary, "**For with God nothing will be impossible.**" Luke 1:37.

May we have that kind of faith to walk!

As we read on notice how God instructs Abram in what he now needs to do!

VERSES 17-18

God has given to us His precious promises, but we must walk in them just as Abram was given this land and then told to walk in it.

Keep in mind that Abram didn't own any piece of this land and yet, he believed the Lord and walked; only going on the promise of God, His Word to him!

Peter tells us in II Peter 1:2-4, "**Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.**"

God gives to us all we need for life, for godliness, He has given to us His precious promises, and thus, He tells us to partake of what He has given to us or to walk in the land, walk by faith!

Notice what Abram did. We are told that Abram pitched his tent in Mamre, which means "*fatness*" and in the land of Hebron, which means "*fellowship or communion.*"

Notice the picture here as Abram is walking with the Lord, as he was in fellowship with God. He had fatness of soul, or he was so overwhelmed with the Lord, which then causes him to worship the Lord as he builds an altar to the Lord!

Abram left all the world had for him behind and looked to the richness of communion he had with God!

May we learn the lesson from Abram!

Let me close with these words from Ray Stedman. He wrote,

Then he said to Abram, "Arise, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I will give it to you."

The land is all that Christ will be to us through the eternal ages to come. But God is saying to us, "Don't wait for it. You don't have to wait until you die to enjoy this. You can have it now, if you will possess it in Christ. Walk through the land. Set your feet upon it. Possess it - now!"

If we, seeing Abram walking up and down the land, had said to the Canaanites and Perizzites, "Do you know who this man is? This is the owner of all this land!" They would have looked at us with pity, laughed, and continued on their way. But it was true!

Wherever Abram wanted to move in that land, God opened the door for him. The whole land was his. He could go where he wanted. He could live where he chose.

The Canaanites and the Perizzites had to move out when Abram came in.

Thus the Spirit of God declares to us in Romans 6:14 (RSV): "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."

Whenever you want to be free from the weakness, and ruin, and power of sin, you can! The land lies open before you. Possess it! . . .

Everyone dwells in a world exactly like that of Abram and Lot. A world in which material values constantly clamor for us to make a choice.

We have only so much time to invest, so much life to spend, and we are pressured to try to grab the best for ourselves while we can.

We can say with Lot, "I want what the world can offer me now, I want the cities of the plain."

Or we may wait with Abram, content with our tent and altar, enjoying the blessings of the land by faith now, and waiting for God's fulfillment of all his promises in that wonderful age yet to come.

The Christian who is content to let God make his choices finds it easy to fulfill the New Testament word: "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you," (1 Thessalonians 5:18 RSV).

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Amen to that! May we walk by faith and not by sight, not only believing in the promises that God has given to us, but then walking accordingly and taking possession of all that God has for us!