

Genesis 13:5-18 and 14:1-16

Last week we learned from Abram's experience that God completely *restores* the penitent sinner to fellowship with Himself.

Yes, sin does have consequences both for ourselves and for those around us.

However, just as the prodigal's request to be made "**a hired servant**" was rejected by his father, so our Heavenly Father will not accept His child into a relationship that is anything less than full fellowship.

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So, upon returning from Egypt, Abram was *fully* restored, and found himself back in the place of blessing---"**Unto the**

place of the altar, which he had made there at the first."

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But there was still one hindrance to the full realization of God's promises in his life.

No doubt it had seemed natural for Abram to take his nephew Lot with him on his journey to Canaan.

Lot was the son of Haran, Abram's brother, who had died early in life.

In the past, no doubt Uncle Abram had felt the need to take Lot under his wing when his own father had died.

And so, because he felt this responsibility to look after his nephew, it would be natural for him to take Lot to Canaan.

However, as right as it may have seemed,
this action was in direct disobedience
to God's command, as we see it in---
Genesis 12:1 **"--Get thee out of thy
country, and from thy kindred, and from
thy father's house, unto a land that I
will shew thee."**

And like any of God's commands, there was a
good reason behind His requirement.
You see, God knew that Lot was not a man of
faith, so as long as he was with Abram,
he would hold back God's blessing.
Yes, Lot was only carried along by Abram's
influence and example, rather than
having a strong personal faith of his
own.

And down through history, there have been
many individuals like Lot.
They follow a man rather than God.

In any great work of faith, they are merely hangers on.

They may continue for a time, carried on by the faith of others, but eventually they prove to be either a dead weight upon the testimony, or an actual hindrance to it.

So it was with Lot.

He had no real call of God in his life, but simply followed in the steps of Uncle Abram until **"the lusts of other things"** entering in, finally separated them.

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V 5-9 **"And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.**

6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

7 And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

9 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."

Abram was not controlled by a desire for wealth, for God had done a work in his heart down in Egypt.

Even though he was the elder, and should have been given the preference, Abram generously gave the first choice to Lot, and Lot jumped at the chance to get the best deal.

V 10-13 **"And Lot 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.**

¹¹ **Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.**

¹² **Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent**

toward Sodom.

**13 But the men of Sodom were wicked
and sinners before the LORD
exceedingly."**

On the surface, it might seem to us that the
strife between their herdsmen was the
cause of Lot's eventual downfall.

But that was only the surrounding
circumstances, not the cause.

This problem no more produced the worldly
desires in Lot's heart than it did the
faith in Abram's.

No, it only served to bring out what was
really there in the first place.

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And did you notice the reason Abram gave for
ending the strife as quickly as
possible?

His concern clearly showed where his priorities were.

V 8 **"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee"--- "for we be brethren."**

Abraham had a testimony to maintain before the heathen.

V 7 tells us that **"the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land,"** and Abram had no desire to bring reproach upon the name of the Lord again as he had done in Egypt.

Yes, he had learned his lesson well, and was determined to seek peace rather than his personal rights in the matter.

Now V 10 says, concerning **"the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where."**

So, to Abram's trained eye, who after all was a professional herdsman, this well-watered plain must have looked as attractive to him as it did to Lot.

So why didn't Abram exercise his personal right, as the elder person in the family, to make sure he got first pick on this beautiful piece of ground?

Well, in spite of its potential to produce wealth, he also realized that its inhabitants were a very wicked people.

And besides all that, Abram believed that he could safely give Lot the first choice, and God would still protect his own interests.

This was heavenly wisdom indeed.

And that is what faith always does: it allows God to choose its inheritance, and it also allows Him to make it good.

Yes, faith is always satisfied with the portion which God gives.

It can always say, **"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."**

It matters not where **"the lines"** fall, for in the judgment of faith they always fall **"in pleasant places"** just because God has ordered it.

So, the man of faith can easily afford to allow the man of sight to make his choice.

He can say, **"If thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."**

Let the man of the world choose what he will, for there is never the slightest danger that he will lay his hand upon faith's treasure.

And so Abram graciously gave the choice to Lot in full assurance that God would maintain his cause.

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So what did Lot choose when the whole land of Canaan was before him?

He chose Sodom, the very place that God would soon destroy.

But why would he choose such a place?

Well, obviously, He chose by outward appearance, having no knowledge of the coming judgment or any concern about God's guidance in the matter.

Oh, I know, he couldn't be expected to see the future, but he certainly could see the wickedness of the people, and that should have been enough to stop him.

However, the promise of riches blinded him to all else.

The plain of Jordan suited him, for it was good for business.

And perhaps even the city of Sodom suited him, for, after all, he **"pitched his tent toward Sodom."**

Lot had come from Ur of the Chaldees, which was a great city, so probably he longed for the bright lights.

Perhaps the rural life that he had lived while following Uncle Abram had not been entirely to his liking.

Yes, it would seem that Lot was not only very pleased with his choice of the plain of Jordan, but also the society of Sodom itself.

So, without seeking for any guidance from Abram's God, he eagerly left the place of testimony and camped near the place of judgment.

And from that initial move, there seems to have been a steady progress downward.

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Psalm 1:1 says, "**Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.**"

But for Lot, who had "**pitched his tent toward Sodom,**" there seems to have been a steady progress in exactly that direction.

First, he walked in the counsel of ungodly, for he had purposely made them his near neighbours.

Then he stood in the way of sinners and kept company with them.

Yes, he left his tent behind him, and moved into a house in that wicked city.

And, finally, he sat in the seat of the scornful, and that's exactly where the angels found him when they visited Sodom.

Genesis 19:1 **"And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom."**

Yes, sin is progressive, and one compromise always makes way for another.

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Abram, in his desire to settle the strife quickly, had given Lot the choice of any of the land in Canaan.

His main concern had been for the honour of God's name.

But had he been too generous?

No, he was simply acting in faith, and God made sure that Abram would not be the loser for his generosity.

So, as Lot had "lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan," so now we see Abram being encouraged to lift up his eyes and behold what God had for him.

V 14-18 "And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

¹⁵ For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

¹⁶ And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

¹⁷ Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it;

for I will give it unto thee.

18 Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD."

Now that Abram's tie with Lot was finally broken, God could reveal His promise to him in a more meaningful way.

For some time now we have noticed the gradual unfolding of God's promise to Abram as he had been gradually freed of one encumbrance after another.

In chapter 12:1-2, Abram had been told to go to--"**a land that I will shew thee.**"

And also at that time, God had promised --"**I will make of thee a great nation.**"

Then, when he had obeyed the Lord by entering Canaan, God told him that this land would actually belong to his

family---"**Unto thy seed will I give
this land.**"

So now that Abram was completely separated from his "**kindred**" and from his "**father's house,**" God could make His promises much more specific.

God told him to walk through the land to the North and South and East and the West, to mark out its boundaries, for He would give the very land that he stood on to him and to his descendents for a possession.

And God was also much more specific in His description of Abram's descendents.

They would be without number, "**as the dust of the earth.**"

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And just for the record, this promise was
literally fulfilled under the reign of
King Solomon.

Please turn with me, to 1 Kings 4: 20-21

**"Judah and Israel were many, as the
sand which is by the sea in multitude,
eating and drinking, and making merry.**

**²¹ And Solomon reigned over all
kingdoms from the river unto the land
of the Philistines, and unto the border
of Egypt: they brought presents, and
served Solomon all the days of his
life."**

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But most importantly, hidden in this promise
to Abram was a promise that would
greatly affect Israel and every other
nation throughout history.

We see this in Genesis 13:15 **"For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever."**

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In our English translation, we might not understand the significance of V 15, because in the English language, the word **"seed"** is spelled the same whether it is in the singular or the plural form.

So, as far as we are concerned, this verse could be talking about a single seed or a bushel of seed.

There is no doubt from the context that the word **"seed"** in V 16 is referring to Israel, for it clearly says that they will be **"as the dust of the earth."** So because of this, we naturally assumed

that V 15 is also referring to Israel,
but that is not the case.

How do we know that?

Well, because the book of Galatians makes
the meaning of V 15 perfectly clear.

Galatians 3:16 **"Now to Abraham and his seed
were the promises made. He saith not,
And to seeds, as of many; but as of
one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."**

So in actual fact, the word **"seed"** in V 15
is referring to Christ, Israel's
Messiah.

So then, according to God's promise to
Abram, some day Christ will actually
reign over this whole world from the
very land that Abram was standing on
that day!

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Now it is true that Abram did not separate himself from Lot willingly.

However, when separation was finally forced upon him, he showed a remarkable amount of faith and a genuine concern for his testimony.

Yes, in complete faith he had given Lot his choice, and had relied upon God to maintain his own cause.

It was a mountaintop experience in Abram's life, and the beginning of a life of separation to his God.

V 18 **"Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD."**

Clearly, by his move to **"the plain of Mamre,"** Abram expressed a desire for a separated life.

He was now far from the place where he could see "**the plain of Jordan**" and the city of Sodom.

And the plain of Mamre was to be the area in which he would spend most of his life thereafter.

It was also the location of the Cave of Machpelah near Hebron where he and his wife Sarah would be buried.

Yes, it was the place of separation that he had chosen, indeed, that God had chosen for him.

It was the place of the tent where he would live as a stranger and a pilgrim in the earth, and it was the place of the altar where he would be a worshipper of God.

Lot might choose Sodom, but not Abram. He sought and found his all in God.

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In contrast, Lot's aspirations were so very different.

There was no altar in Sodom, but that didn't seem to bother him.

No, communion with Abram's God did not concern him a great deal. He was looking for something quite different.

However, even during the relatively short time in which he successfully gained wealth by his compromises, he could not have been a very happy man, for God's word says concerning such individuals -- **"he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul."**

And as we now know, even the wealth, for which he had been so willing to compromise his convictions, would eventually be taken away from him.

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Although Chapter 13 records the time of Abram and Lot's separation, in actual fact, their hearts had been going in opposite directions for quite some time.

Abraham was a man of faith who **"looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,"** while Lot was the kind of man who would choose Sodom because it suited him so well.

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As Chapter 14 begins, we find that some considerable time has gone by. Abram has been living the separated life in **"the plain of Mamre,"** while Lot was gaining in status and prestige in the wicked city of Sodom.

Now, Lot wasn't really an evil man as far as his personal morals were concerned, but he was willing to compromise his personal convictions for the sake of money.

We know that Lot was not inherently evil, because 2 Peter 2:8 says concerning him **"(For that *righteous* man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)."**

So in his case, it could certainly be said that--"**the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**"

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Now Lot might argue, as some Christians do, that he was there to bear a testimony among them, but, actually, he had little power to act against the wickedness in that city, even if he had been inclined to do so.

On the other hand, Abram dealt with the wickedness of Sodom quite differently. He had completely separated himself from that wicked city.

So the question comes, *Which one was able to do the most good, Abram or Lot?*

Well, the record certainly shows that the best way to serve the world is to separate from it while testifying against it.

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Lot's method seemed to be quite successful for a while, but eventually it got him into a lot of trouble.

The old saying goes, *If you fly with the crows, you will get shot at.*

Genesis 14:8-12 **"And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim;**

⁹ **With Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five.**

¹⁰ **And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they**

that remained fled to the mountain.

¹¹ And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.

¹² And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed."

Here we see that war had come into the valley of Siddim and had devastated the five cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar.

Sodom was looted of its riches, and the residents, along with Lot and his family, were taken captive.

Of course Lot's riches, which he had so compromised his testimony to obtain, were taken also.

V 13-16 **"And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for**

he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.

¹⁴ And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

¹⁵ And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.

¹⁶ And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people."

Unlike Lot, Abram, who was living far from the society of Sodom, was not directly affected by the war.

Up on the plain of Mamre, he could have continued living the quiet life of the wealthy herdsman.

However, when he heard that his nephew was taken captive, his family ties and brotherly love galvanized him into action.

Genuine faith, while it always renders us independent, never renders us indifferent.

So was godly Abraham too sweet and kind to fight?

No. He acted with courage and decision, and with the energy and determination of a good man.

Abram had 318 trained servants born in his own house.

It was his own little army.

No doubt the country he lived in was more like the Wild West, having no central government.

So, every small city would have its own king, and each person living in the country was responsible for the protection of their own families and herds.

As a result, Abram had his own standing army, and for additional protection, he had joined a confederation of his neighbours, Aner, Eshcol and Mamre, who were probably stockmen also.

These were the resources he could call upon. Not a very great army to deal with the enemy hordes that he must face, but, like

Gideon, who routed an army of 135,000 Midianites with only 300 men, Abram went forth fearlessly, depending upon his God.

Yes, this was a much different man than the one who had caved in to fear in the land of Egypt.

Also like Gideon, they struck at night, and then followed them and slaughtered them all the way to Dan in the northern part of what is now Israel.

The kings themselves were killed, as we will see in verse 17, and all was retrieved, both captives and possessions.

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Here is an interesting footnote in connection with this passage.

Abram was a godly man, living in an area where men needed to take care of themselves.

He had trained servants, or soldiers, and with them he went out to fight and deliver the innocent from captivity, and punished the murdering, slaughtering hosts of the kings who had come against them, and, of course, also delivered his nephew Lot.

Some earnest Christians teach that we should not engage in war during this age of grace, but rather make all adverse situations a matter for prayer.

But here we see that Abram, although a man of faith, took action, using the resources he had.

And we will also see, when we get to V 20, that God's priest Melchizedek blessed

Abram for his actions. **“---And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.”**

So, by his actions, Abram demonstrated the principle that godliness means patriotism. It means the support of the weak, the care of our country, and the care of our families.

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V 21 **"And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself."**

Abram had just encountered a formidable enemy and had come out victorious because of his faith in the Lord.

However, in the seeming generosity of the king of Sodom, there was as great a danger to his spiritual well-being as

the physical danger he had faced in the battle of the kings.

What will Abram's reaction be, and how will God help him at this critical time in his life?

That will be the subject for next week's lesson.