

T R I N I T Y  
B I B L E C H U R C H  
D A L L A S

The Sermon

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Genesis 13:1-18

"Making Life Choices"

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TRANSCRIPT

We're in Genesis chapter 13, and I want to begin by reading the chapter, setting it before your eyes and your heart, and then we will carefully look at God's message through our hearts today from it. I would remind all of us that none of us are here by happenstance, we're all here by divine providence. This is a divine appointment for each one of us to be here today. And God is a very intentional God, and He has directed our steps here to this worship service, and He has directed us to this chapter in Genesis. And so in God's perfect timing, we come to this chapter. And I have no idea who among us here today especially needs to hear this chapter. It is relevant to each and every one of us. It speaks directly to every heart and life here today. But for some, this will be a very timely message.

So the title of this message is "Making Life Choices." Genesis chapter 13, beginning in verse 1, So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him. Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold. He went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the Lord. Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's

livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land.

"So Abram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left.' Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere - this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah - like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.

"The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, 'Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; and I will give it to you.' Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord." This is the reading of God's inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word that is profitable for every soul. Let us go to Him and pray.

[Prayer] Father, as we approach now the time to look together into Your Word, we again are mindful of the need that we have, to have eyes that see and ears to hear, a heart to receive and believe. And so, Lord, we ask now as we study this passage that You would give us the true understanding of it, and that You would also show us the relevance of it for our personal lives. This speaks directly to each and every one of us. Our heart is like a target, and the arrow of this passage is aimed right at our heart, and it will surely find our heart. So may it bring much blessing to us. May it establish

us in our faith, and guide and direct us, and may it have eternal impact upon us. Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

In these verses we clearly see the importance of making right choices in life. The choices that we make determine so much about us. In fact, in the sense, they determine everything about us. Our choices determine who we marry; and that takes us down a path. If we marry, that takes us down another path. The choices we make determine where we live, and what we do; and that takes us down a path. The choices that we make determine where we go to church, and really what we believe, and what influence is brought to bear upon our lives, who our friends are. And ultimately, our choices, one choice in particular, determines where we will spend eternity. And so in this sense, the choices that we make define us, and direct us, and determine everything about our lives.

Decisions determine destiny. And so we must learn to choose wisely, not by mere outward appearance that our fleshly eyes would see, but with spiritual insight, and with discernment. We must learn to choose not by trusting our own understanding, but by leaning upon divinely-given discretion and understanding. Left to ourselves we will always choose incorrectly; that is why we so desperately need the Lord's direction for the choices that we make. I think of Proverbs 3, verses 5 and 6: "Trust the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths."

This is precisely what we see in Genesis chapter 13. Here is loud and clear, before our very eyes, the importance of choosing wisely. And in this passage, we see Abram choosing wisely: where he would live, where he would worship, how he would interface with Lot. But we see Lot choosing unwisely. And the consequences for Lot will be devastating, as they are standing so close together side by side. But the choices that they will make will take them in totally opposite directions and affect their future.

And so, every one of us need to be reminded that life is made up of a series of choices. Some are small, some are large. But even small choices come

with major ramifications. Large doors swing on small hinges, and even the smallest of decisions can have enormous effect upon where and how we live. So this passage speaks to making life choices and making them wisely.

So as we walk through this chapter, through this text, the first thing I want you to note is "the caravan"; that's in verses 1 through 4, "the caravan," as we see Abram in a caravan returning from Egypt back to the Promised Land. So, verse 1, "Abram went up from Egypt." He went up in the sense he went north. Egypt is to the south, really south and west, and Canaan is to the north and to the east. So he went up from Egypt to the Negev.

Now the Negev is the southern part of Canaan, it's the southern desert region. In fact, the word "Negev" means "the southern land," and it is a dry, barren wasteland. And Moses, as he writes this, wants us to see in verse 1 that "he and his wife and all that belonged to him were with him." His wife Sarai was there, and God had delivered her out of the situation with Pharaoh providentially, and it says, "all that belonged to him." And as Abram now comes back to Canaan, he comes back wealthier than he left. He returns with all that Pharaoh had bestowed upon him – sheep, and donkeys, and servants, and oxen, and gold, and silver. And that's why it required a caravan, to transport all of this massive wealth that Abram has acquired, has received while he was in in Egypt. And so, whether it was multiple camels or multiple donkeys, however, this caravan with his wife and all that he belongs now heads back to the Negev, "and Lot with him." And Lot will be a major player in this chapter. Lot, as you know, is Abram's younger nephew.

In verse 2, "Now Abram was very rich." You know, it's not a sin to have money, the sin is for money to have you. The sin is not to have possessions, the sin is for your possessions to possess you. And we see here Abram was very rich. And the word "very" means "exceedingly," and the word "rich" here comes from – I told you last week – the same root word for "glory," which means "weight" or "heaviness," that God, the glory of God is very weighty and heavy in His celestial majesty.

And Abram is heavy in assets, and he is very weighty in holdings. He took a scale, and you put his assets on one side of the scales, it would tip; he owns so much in livestock, in silver and in gold. That's how wealth was measured in this patriarchal time, not with land, because people lived like nomads; they just moved their tents around, and they were constantly on the go looking for greener pasture, looking for better water. And so wealth was not measured by real estate, it was by the livestock that grazed that land.

In verse 3, "He went on his journey from the Negev as far as Bethel." And Bethel is north of Jerusalem, so he now continues his northern ascent. And interesting, of all the cities in the Old Testament, Bethel is mentioned more than any other city, other than Jerusalem. So it'll be a very important city in future chapters that we will study. It's up in the hill country. It's cooler, there's more water, it's greener than the Negev.

And in verse 4 he says, "to the place of the altar," which he had made there formally. He returns to the place where he had built an altar to worship God. And there we read in verse 4, "Abram called on the name of the Lord." Now here's what's interesting. Abram is still unconverted. Abram is still an unbeliever. He will not be converted until chapter 15, verses 6 and 7, when he believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. And that is when the divine act of justification by faith took place, in Genesis chapter 15, verses 5 and 6.

And so here we see Abram actually calling on the name of the Lord, though he does not have a personal relationship with God. And this shows us – and this is very relevant for us today – this shows us that you can be in church, and you can sing the hymns, and you can agree with the prayers, and you can sit under the preaching of the Word of God, and you can even call on the name of the Lord, yet not have committed your life to the Lord. It's very possible to go through the external motions of religious activity and not be saved. It is very possible to be so close to the kingdom of God, and yet not enter in, that you can have your toes right up to the narrow gate that leads into the kingdom. You can see others go through that gate, you can admire that gate, you can sing praises to that gate, you can speak to that gate, but yet not go through that gate. And I think it is a call for each and

every one of us here today to make certain that we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ personally; not mom, not dad, not spouse, but that you have a personal encounter with the risen Christ, that you know the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart of heart, that you have met the risen Christ, that you have been born from above, something over which you have no control, that the Spirit of God has found you out and drawn you to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that's the first thing that we learn here with Abram, even as he returns back with familiarity. And how easy it is to go back into the routine, and back into, I would say, the rut of where you had formally, let's say, had a religious experience with the Lord; but yet you do not know the Lord. That's where Abram is. And no doubt, with this many people in one room here today, there would be more than one or two that would be like that. And perhaps the Lord is tapping you on the shoulder right now, and perhaps tugging on your heart: "Lord, that's me." If so, commit your life to Christ today.

Now this leads, second, to "the conflict." Beginning in verse 5, a conflict arose. We see in verse 5, "Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents." He himself was very wealthy as well. This was a prosperous family. This was a family that by common grace had untold wealth transferred to them at various times and in various ways, and it was accumulating; and Lot was a part of this.

And in verse 6, "And the land could not sustain them, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together." What this means is they had so many flocks, so many donkeys, so many sheep between the two of them, that there wasn't enough grass, and there was not enough water, and there was not enough space and room for them to co-exist together; that's how wealthy they were. And so the land could not bear them up.

And so, in verse 7, "And there was strife." This word for "strife" in the original Hebrew language means "conflict." It's used other places for like a

lawsuit. It speaks of controversy, and friction, and tension, and contention, and quarreling, and disputing.

"There was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling in the land." And that's another reason why the crowded conditions were such that those who were already living in the land no doubt had flocks, and in need of grass and water. And now here shows up Abram and Lot with their massive herds and flocks, and now there's no room really to conduct business; and so there was this intense strife between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen.

And we learn several things from this by practical application, and number one, as this relates to Abram and Lot, is there is no strife like family strife. It's because family is so close, so permanent, so sensitive, so vulnerable. And family knows one another's hot buttons, and they know how to rub someone the wrong way almost with just the look of an eye. And so with family, things build up over time and over many years. It's almost like a pebble in a shoe: it starts out hardly, recognize it, but it rubs and it rubs and it rubs until there's a problem. And so, first thing we see here is family strife.

This is the Sunday after Thanksgiving, and family has been together. I see some of you smiling, others have you crying. And you understand that there is no tension like family tension. And that is why we as believers must be those who take the high road, and we must be the peacemakers, and we must be those who yield and those who consider the interests of others as more important than our own, that we be those who are not determined to win the argument, that we be those who are willing to be quiet at times and to withhold what could have easily been said.

A second thing we learn here before we move on is that riches can be a curse, it can promote a new level of conflict. A simpler life can be a blessing, because when you bring money into the picture, that can also escalate the strife and the conflict.

The third thing we learn here is when you bring both family and money together, that can really escalate conflict. And as you know, wherever there's a will, there's a relative. Selah, pause and meditate. Wisdom is now shouting in the streets.

So that's what's taking place here. You have both family and finances in a collision course in this situation, and it is creating enormous strife. And I'll say something else. It never ends up with just this being between two people, it always creates tension for everyone in the house and everyone in the family. And this didn't just stay with Abram and Lot. No, it affected Abram's herdsmen, it affected Lot's herdsmen, and all this being played out in front of the Canaanites and the Perizzites. But the point is, in the family it multiplies and it affects so many other people. Conflict never stays isolated with just two people.

Well, this leads now to, third, I want you to note, "the concession," in verses 8 and 9, "the concession," as Abram now commendably takes the humble route. And this is set before us here so that you and I would emulate the humble route.

And so we read in verse 8, "So Abram said to Lot," and we would expect Abram to take the initiative because he is the older family member, he is the senior adult, and so the weight of responsibility would lie with him. "And so Abram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no strife between you and me.'" This is such an admirable desire. Abram is not trying to win, he is wanting to maintain peace. And there is no price tag that can be put upon peace.

"He said, 'Nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers,' - meaning - 'we are relatives in the same family. How can we not get along.'" It would be understandable if he had strife with the Canaanites or the Perizzites who are just pagan heathens, idolaters. "But why can't we live in the same family and be able to get along with one another?" And so he says, "We're brothers."



Verse 9, "Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me." And he puts that in a very gracious, kind way. He's not saying, "Get out of here," he's just saying, "I have all this livestock, you have all this livestock; there's not enough grass and water for both of us to coexist. There is now tension, there is now strife. It's only going to escalate and go from bad to worse."

So this is a very prudent decision that Abram makes, and he says, "Please separate from me." And he said, "If to the left, if you go to the west, then I will go to the right, to the east; or if to the right, which is to the east, then I will go to the left, which is to the west." And Abram very humbly yields to Lot and says, "Lot, you decide."

Now Abram could have very easily have said, "Hey, God spoke to me, not you. God called me out of Ur of Chaldees. I've heard the voice of God, I'm a channel through whom God has spoken, so you need to follow my direction." Or, he could have pulled the seniority card and said, "Little nephew, you need to follow my direction. I'm going to go this way, you take the leftovers."

But Abram has learned a very valuable lesson and he learned it down in Egypt, which we saw last week in Genesis chapter 12. In Genesis chapter 12, when Abram is down in Egypt, he thought of himself first. You remember how he threw his wife Sarai under the bus and said, "Would you just lie a little bit to Pharaoh so that I can save my neck? You wouldn't mind being a part of one of his harem, would you?" What a tender warrior he was.

But he's been through the school of hard knocks down in Egypt, and that can take the starch out of you, and that can take the wind out of your sail, and it can drop you to your knees, even as an unbeliever, and it can wean you off of yourself. And that's exactly what has happened to Abram as he's gone down to Egypt; he's been humbled. And so now he gives the choice to Lot, because it's no longer about Abram first, it's about Lot being first.

And God is using all of this to prepare the soil of his heart to be converted in chapter 15. And God uses trials in our lives. He uses adversity in our lives to bring us to Himself. Just know this: far more people are converted in the storms of life than they are in the successes of life. Far more people are converted to Christ in the basement than they are in the penthouse. Far more people are converted to Christ as a result of adversity where they come to the realization, "I'm no longer in charge of my life, and I'm not doing a good job with my life," and they begin to look up and they begin to consider that the solution to their life's problem is outside of themselves, it is beyond themselves; and they look up to God, and call upon the name of the Lord, and commit their life to Him.

And so, Abram is in the process of having the soil of his heart to be plowed up by these trials and adversity, and he comes to this point now, and it's a humbler Abram. And I wonder what Egypt you've been to where you have learned this lesson. I wonder if you have been dropped to your knees recently. I wonder how God has used that to prepare the soil of your heart even for this message today. I wonder how you could look in the mirror and truly say to God, "I'm a better person because I went through that trial, because I went down to Egypt and I was taken down a notch. I didn't have it my way." And God has used that now to make you the person you must become. And that is what is happening in the life of Abram.

So this is a totally different Abram than what we saw last week in chapter 12. He's no longer looking in the mirror and singing, "How great thou art." He now is saying, "Lot, though you are younger, though you have less wealth, I will yield to you. You decide."

So that leads to "the choice" in verse 10, "the choice." So in verse 10, "Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere." He looked with physical eyes. He sized everything up from a worldly perspective. "He looked and he saw the valley of Jordan," - which is the Jordan River Valley - "and that it was well watered." And because it was well watered, that means that there were green meadows on both sides

of the river, that it was a land that was lush and fertile and blossoming, and would be absolutely perfect for his flock.

Now what Lot has not taken into account the way he should have is what follows in the middle of verse 10: "This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah." And Sodom and Gomorrah are on this piece of land. And Lot is seeing with only physical eyes, and he's probably made a little T-square, and on one side are the positives, and on the other side, the negatives; and he'll write down all the pluses on one side and the negatives on the other, "And if one outweighs the other, I'm going to go that way, because it just adds up better that way."

In fact, it was so lush and so green, that at the end of verse 10 we read, "like the garden of the Lord." That means the garden of Eden. It was paradise. It looked like a golf course, it was that manicured and that good-looking. I mean, the garden of Eden was well watered.

And then he adds, "like the land of Egypt." Well, yes, the Nile River flows through Egypt, and on both sides of the Nile River are well-irrigated lands in which people are growing their crops by the bounty. And so Lot, as he lifted up his eyes and saw all this, "And you're going to let me choose first?" I mean, his eyes are about to pop out of his skull.

Verse 11, "So Lot chose for himself," and the key is "for himself." Not by the Lord, but for himself. He made the decision based upon outward appearance. He made the decision based upon the external façade. He made a decision based upon, really, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life; let's face it. "And Lot journeyed eastward," to the right. "Thus they" - Abram and Lot - "separated from one another," and it was a peaceful solution. And so Abram's attempt for there to be peace in the valley has succeeded at this point, and they have separated without any further division and friction.

And verse 12, "Abram settled in the land of Canaan," – it's to the west in the opposite direction of Lot – "while Lots settled in the cities of the valley," in the cities of the Jordan River Valley. And what we see at the end of verse 12 is so terrifying: "and moved his tents," – the Old King James – "pitched his tents as far as Sodom." Yes, that Sodom; that wicked, defiled, depraved city right smack dab in the middle of such luxurious prosperity.

Verse 13, "Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly." Just pause there for a moment. The word "wicked" means "evil," "morally perverse," "depraved beyond imagination," "taking sin to such vile, low levels." They were wicked. But on top of that, "They were exceedingly wicked," and it's the same word that was used earlier that, "Abram was exceedingly wealthy." And if you had the scales here and you stacked up the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, there would have been so much weighty, heavy, vile, corrupt, wicked sin, that it would have broken the scale. As we know later, it will become synonymous with homosexuality and the vile depraving of God's intention.

And then on top of that, at the end of verse 13, if the word "wicked" was not enough – which it is – but then the word "exceedingly." If that's not enough to tip the scales, then he adds at the end of verse 13, Moses does, "and sinners against the Lord." They were violators of the holiness of God at the highest level. They were violators not just of their own conscience, and not just against one another, but this here it says, "against the Lord."

We learn a lot here, do we not, about making life decisions, that all that is glitter is not gold, and that making decisions just based upon what your eye sees and how it adds up to you is not necessarily what is going to lead you into the very center of God's blessing for your life. Everything in life is not always what it appears to be; and at times, there is a very attractive label on that bottle of poison; at times, there is a very attractive bait on that hook. And from a worldly point of view, Lot's choice appeared to be an excellent choice; but from a spiritual and moral vantage point, it was disastrous.

And we must learn from this, whether we are choosing a spouse to marry, a job to take, a house to buy, a school to attend; that is not always what it appears to be. Just like with Lot, this was not all what it appeared to be; and this choice by Lot put him on a slippery slope from which he would never recover. And I want to take you through these steps.

There are five descending steps. This is just the first step that Lot puts his foot out on this descent from which he will never return. And the first step is right here: "He looked toward Sodom." Surely he must have known about Sodom. I mean, their wickedness rose to the heights of heaven. They were famous for their sin and wickedness and depravity. Yet, number one, he looked toward Sodom and liked what he saw.

Second, "He moved his tents near Sodom," and we saw that in verse 12. He's drawn to Sodom like the moth to the flame. But he has no idea the fire that he is playing with, and how combustible it will be the closer he draws to Sodom.

Third, "He will eventually be living in Sodom," not in the outskirts, not in the surrounding area; he will actually move into Sodom and expose his family to Sodom, and expose his daughters to Sodom, and they will end up marrying men in Sodom; and he'll expose his wife to Sodom. And when the time comes for them to get out of Sodom, she turns around with longing desire for Sodom, and God just encases her in salt. He has moved his entire family to the very doorsteps of hell itself. Once you get on the slippery slope of sin, it is hard to get off; it is a super highway that has very few exit signs.

And then, fourth, "He will be sitting in the gate of Sodom." So, not just will he move into the city, in chapter 19, verse 1, he's sitting at the gate of Sodom. And what does that mean? It means he's become one of the community leaders. He's become one of the political bosses. He has become one of the financial forces in Sodom. Lot accepted Sodom, and Sodom accepted Lot; and he really became their mission field, and he became so much like them, Lot cast his lot with Sodom.

But it doesn't end there. There's a fifth downward step on this slippery slope, and fifth, "He will see Sodom burn," and that is chapter 19, verse 24. We'll get there one day, Lord willing.

Now you just think about this. All of that wealth, which probably escalates while he's doing business at the city gates of Sodom, it all burns up. What a fool! "Everything you've invested your life in just to get ahead in the world, it all goes up in smoke when God brings fire and brimstone down and literally buries the city." And his sons-in-law are burned up in the fire and brimstone.

And I'll tell you - I wasn't even going to put it in my notes, but I'm going to go ahead and tell you - there's a sixth step, where after Lot leaves Sodom, he ends up in a cave; and his daughters who have lost their husbands want children. So his daughters come into the cave and get him drunk so that he will impregnate them in incest. He ends up a slobbering fool, and it all started with the first step.

If you just said, "Lot, you choose which way you want to go. But before I let you choose, let me just show you into the future where this is all going to end up, that if you choose to go east, to the right, and you get on this moving sidewalk of sin, you're going to end up in a cave drunk, impregnating your daughters." No one would have chosen that path. But sin will always take you further than you want to go; it will cost you more than you want to pay; it will end up in destruction - and it all comes back to this first choice: to make a decision just based upon outward façade.

And there's been many a woman who has ended up marrying a man she had no idea what she had bargained for. And there are many a parents who have sent their kids to certain schools and had no idea that the gates of hades were at the entrance to that campus. So there's a lot for us to learn here, is there not, that Lot trusted in his own understanding. And as we will see, Abram will trust in what God wants him to see.

So this takes us to verse 14, "the covenant, the covenant." Could be "the confirmation," but I like, "the covenant." And verse 14, "The Lord said to Abram." Here is the main actor in this narrative, because He is the director of this narrative, because He is the script writer of this narrative. He is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

So, verse 14, this divine intervention by the grace of God: "The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him," and this is almost like Jesus in the upper room waiting until Judas leaves the room to open the treasure vault to give more truth. "After Lot had separated from him, God said, 'Now lift up your eyes and look. I want you, Abram, I want you to see what I see. I want you to see with My perspective. I want you to see with eyes of faith. Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, north, northward, southward, eastward, westward; for all the land' - verse 15 - 'you see I have given it to you.'"

And here's a strange mystery. This is the land that God had sovereignly chosen for Abram from before the foundation of the world. It's the Promised Land, it's the Holy Land. And yet, we see human decision and human responsibility, and Lot choosing to go in the other direction. And we would think, "Well, what if Lot had chosen to go in the other direction?" Well, fleshly eyes will always see the world through the eyes of the flesh. "Man plans his ways, but God directs his steps," Proverbs 16, verse 1.

And so in the sovereignty of God, God wants Abram to be here; and at the same time, He's allowed Lot to choose to go in the other direction. "For all the land you see, I have given to you." This is real land. This isn't an allegory of land. This isn't a picture of a palm tree someplace or of a blessing or whatever. No, this is raw real estate. This is real land.

And God says, "I have given you this land and to your descendants forever." And the word "forever" is actually two words in the original Hebrew. which is kind of interesting. There's a preposition which means "as far as" or "until," and then the noun means "always." And it just very simply means

"until always," "there's no end to this." "This piece of land belongs to you and to your descendants forever and ever and ever into eternity.

Verse 16, "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth." That's a figure of speech known as a simile, which "like" or "as," you make a direct comparison. And God, the master teacher, the master communicator, puts it in terms that even Abram can understand, that, "The dust of the earth, those particles are so numerous you couldn't even begin to count them all." He says, "Then your descendants cannot also cannot also be numbered." And when he speaks of descendants here, He's not referring to just physical descendants.

When you come to the book of Galatians in chapter 3, verses 6 through 9, and in chapter 6, verse 16, you see that the descendants of Abram that there is an elect within the elect nation; but the elect unto salvation within the elect nation is only a portion of the whole, "that there will be elect from every tribe and every tongue and every kindred of people, that there will be so many people who will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ down through the centuries, unto the end of the age, that you will not be able to number them."

And so when we speak of even the doctrine of sovereign election, sometimes people shrivel up and go, "Oh, we're so limiting God." No, I want you to understand, God is so full of grace, so full of saving mercy, that He has pulled back the veil of heaven and poured out oceans and oceans and oceans of saving grace upon an innumerable people, of people around the world. And when we get to heaven, it'll be myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands around the throne of God.

And the word "myriad" is the highest number in the Greek language; it means "ten thousand." But it's "myriads," plural, which means "ten thousands," meaning "ten thousand times ten thousand." But "myriads of myriads" means "ten thousands times ten thousands times ten thousands times ten thousands, and then thousands and thousands." How vast will be the New Jerusalem in the heavens above, and the number of those who have



been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Think of the fullness of the worship, as myriads of myriads join their voices together. It will sound like beyond, the sound of many waters. That's how gracious God is.

So He says, in verse 17, to Abram, "Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you." The Canaanites are living there, the Perizzites are living there, and the Canaanites have multiple little enclaves of tribes living there. The earth belongs to the Lord; and the Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. And the Lord can give His real estate to whomever the Lord desires to give His real estate to, regardless of who's living there. It doesn't belong to the Canaanites. It really doesn't even belong to Abram. It belongs to God, who created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1, verse 1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And so, the Canaanites were merely tenants, renters living on God's land; and God, by sovereign authority, now gives it to Abram and his descendants.

So, we conclude, verse 18, "the commitment." So, how is Abram going to respond to this? Just like you and I need to respond: immediate obedience. Verse 18, "Then Abram moved his tent," - he moved it in obedience to God - "and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre," - large groves of trees. And Mamre is about 19 miles southwest of Jerusalem, still up in the high country. It's about 3,000 feet in elevation. The change in elevation in Israel is extraordinary. Here in Texas, everything is just flat as a pancake; but there, there's a lot of elevation change - "which are in Hebron," - that's 22 miles south of Jerusalem - "and there he built an altar to the Lord."

Though he is not yet converted, he's not yet justified by faith, he nevertheless is being reeled in by God, and he's being drawn by God. And what we learn here again is that salvation occurs in the twinkling of an eye. It occurs in a moment. It occurs in a day. It occurs in an hour. It occurs in a minute. It occurs in a split second, like a lightning bolt that comes out of the skies. That's where the new birth takes place, just like that. But there is a buildup to that new birth, and God has to humble people, and He has to redirect people, and He has to put them in another place, all by His

orchestration and design to bring us to Himself. And that will be the testimony that Abram will have.

So, what a study of contrast we have here, is it not, between how Lot made decisions and how Abram made decisions; and it teaches us how you and I need to make decisions. Lot's choice was self-seeking; Abram's, self-denying. Lot's choice was self-glorifying; Abram's, God-glorifying. Lot's choice was based upon what appealed to his physical senses; Abram's, by what appealed to his inner spirit. Lot's choice exposed him to Sodom and great danger to his soul, Abram's choice placed him exactly where God wanted him to be in the fullness of his blessing.

So, you have many choices to make. You make choices every day. How will you make them? Will you be like Lot and make them by what looks good to your eye, how it adds up, what the bottom line is; or will you be like Abram and make them by what God directs you to see and do? Will you make your choices by the flesh, or by faith? That's the issue that is in front of us today. And there is one all-important decision that every one of us here in this room today must make. And to make this decision puts you on the right path from now to eternity. But to fail to make this one decision, this all-important decision is to put you headed towards Sodom forever. It is the decision to commit your life to Jesus Christ.

Have you committed your life to Christ? Have you crossed the line? Have you entered through the narrow gate? Has there been a defining time in your life when you left the darkness and entered into the light, when you left this world and entered into the kingdom of heaven? If not, you are headed for Sodom eternally. Hear my words: you will suffer the wrath of God without end. And it may seem like right now it's just this little choice: "I'll just prolong giving my life to Christ." Or it may be a little decision, "I'll just date an unbeliever," or "I'll just get married to someone who's not a Christian," or "I'll just take this job." And it may look so appealing, and it may look so desirous to your eyes. And you're going to wake up in hell one day, and you'll have no one to blame but yourself, that you played the part of the fool and gambled your soul to the devil.

I point you to Jesus Christ who is the Son of Abraham, who came through the loins in the lineage of Abram, who was born of a virgin, that He would be like us, yet unlike us, without sin. I point you to Jesus Christ who lived a sinless and perfect life, the life that you and I could never live. He lived for us and met all the demands of the Law that we have broken. I point you to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ where He was lifted up to hang suspended upon that cross; and therefore the sins of all who would trust Him, they were transferred to Him. They were placed upon the heavy, exceedingly weight of our sin, was placed upon Christ. And then the Father opened up all of the wrath that belongs to Him and brought it down heavy on His Son, as He suffered in our place the damnation of tormented souls upon that cross. I point you to Christ, who alone has made the way to the Father.

He was taken down from the cross, buried in a borrowed tomb, and on the third day God raised Him from the dead. There upon that cross, He stood in our place, He bore our sins, He suffered our punishment, He purchased our forgiveness, He secured our righteousness, He paid our debt, He won our freedom. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

Have you ever believed in Christ? And if not, today you may be at the altar, but you're not in the kingdom. And so, I call you today, this moment, to take that step of faith, and to entrust your soul to Him, who suffered and bled and died upon the cross for you. If you've done that, you know ten thousand joys. If you've never done that, may you have no joy until you find your rest in Him. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, we see how important life choices are. It takes us either to Sodom, or takes us to the Promised Land; and there's really no other destinations towards which we would be headed. Lord, I so pray that everyone under the sound of my voice would have put their trust in Jesus Christ. And if they have not yet, may this very moment, before I finish this prayer, may they take that step of faith and say, "Lord Jesus, save me, the sinner." We pray this in His matchless name. Amen.