

# The Deceit of Riches vs. The Joy of Christ (Abraham & Lot)

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**Text:** Genesis 13<sup>1</sup>

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**Series:** Genesis (Book of Beginnings)

**Introduction:** Open your Bible to **Genesis 13**. The title of our message is “The Deceit of Riches vs. the Joy of Christ”.

We come to the story of Lot, and we see a saved man who is tempted by riches and comfort. Had we not had the New Testament commentary of what was going on in his heart, we would think that he was joined to the riches that he sought, and that his soul was damned. But Lot was a righteous man.

**2 Peter 2:7-9**, “and if he [God] rescued **righteous Lot**, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked 8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was **tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard**); 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment”.

Yet early in his Christian life he was over taken by the temptation of riches, and it haunted him the rest of his life. We are told to beware of the deceitfulness of riches, because they choke the Word. Many are religious but lost because of the deceitfulness of riches.

**Matthew 13:22**, “As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and **the deceitfulness of riches** choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.”

We come to our text in Genesis 13, and we see faith vs. foolishness. Nothing compares to joy in Christ. Abraham had to learn this. He had to go to Egypt and see how unhappy the love of money is.

We see a great contrast of faith and foolishness in the lives of Abraham and Lot. Money has a great allure, but it’s promises are always deceitful, and it’s peace is always temporary and false.

We are told in **1 Timothy 6:10**, that “**the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.**”

Thankfully Lot never totally wandered from the faith, but he certainly came close.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the *English Standard Version* of the Bible.

**Genesis 13:1-20**, “So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb. 2 Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. 3 And he journeyed on from the Negeb as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the place where he had made an altar at the first. And there Abram called upon the name of the LORD.”

I. First we see the **joy** of living by faith (vs. 1-9). Riches are fine in their proper place.

**Verse 1**, “So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb”. Abram came from Egypt where the only altars were false altars. We don’t see him building altars in Egypt or walking with God, but making rash decisions that put his life and his soul in jeopardy. He almost destroys his own wife.

*Application*: There is no joy in walking by the flesh. There is great worry and very bad decision making.

A. Abram was **rich**, yet he’s a pilgrim. **Verse 2**, “Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.” Yet these riches did not characterize his life. He was not defined by finances, but by faith. He was called “a friend of God”.

When he was in Pharaoh’s palace, he was not walking in the Lord’s blessing. He was outside the land of promise. Now that he was back in a tent, he was receiving God’s blessing.

*Application*: Abram might have been rich now, but it is significant, that we don’t see him building a permanent house. He’s constantly a pilgrim. Of this time, **Hebrews 11:9-10** say, “By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.”

B. Abram **returns** to walking with God. **Verses 3-4**, “And he journeyed on from the Negeb as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the place where he had made an altar at the first. And there Abram called upon the name of the LORD.”

Abram comes back from where he was when the famine began in Canaan. He has come in a spirit of renewal and revival. These altars that Abram built are important because they signify his return to walking with God.

*Application*: We all need constant revival and renewal. We are never neutral or standing still. You are either growing in Christ or you are backsliding.

- C. Abram is not controlled by his **riches**. Socially, Abram is a wealthy nomad. Spiritually, he is a pilgrim looking for a heavenly city. He may be rich, but neither riches nor poverty determine how Abram now makes decisions and lives his life. He is controlled now by joy in the Lord. He lives as a rich nomad, but he's no longer being controlled by riches.

Now in **verses 5-9**, in contrast to the problem in chapter 12, there was too much famine and hurting and desolation, now there is too much wealth! Abraham was so rich, he shared his riches and blessings.

**Verses 5-9**, “And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, 6 so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together, 7 and there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land.

Abraham trusts God with his family. **Verse 8**, “Then Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen.”

He trusts God with his wealth. **Verse 9**, “Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left”.

## II. Now let's look at the **deceitfulness** of riches (vs. 10-13).

God has blessed us with all we really need. He has promised to provide for us.

**Verses 5-6**, And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, 6 so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together”.

- A. We all have the **temptation** that riches are going to solve our problems.

**Verses 10-11**, “And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)”

Lot had plenty of riches, but he thought he needed more!

Your eyes and my eyes will often play tricks on us. There is great deceit in riches. I'm not saying riches are in any way wrong. They often promise far more than they can deliver.

B. Remember, choices have **consequences**. Don't make your choices according to money. **Matthew 6:33**, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

**Verse 11**, "So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other. 12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD".

Lot's one choice affected the influences on his family and his soul, and though he sought wealth, in the end he became desolate and poor in the ashes of Sodom.

**Application:** What are you choosing? Are you choosing to walk with God? Are you choosing to walk by faith?

Lot could not have known the great heartache he would bring upon himself by walking by sight.

1. His choices affected his **influences**. **Verse 13**, "Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD". Lot got to Sodom and found people who walked by sight and not by faith. Walking by sight utterly corrupts a person.
2. His choices affected his **soul**. **2 Peter 2:7-8**, "and if he [God] rescued **righteous Lot**, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked 8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was **tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard**)".

Lot was most certainly a believer. A believer cannot live at peace with sin or in a sinful atmosphere. He lived in torment of the lawlessness around him.

3. His choices affected his **family**. His wife looks back to Sodom, and is turned into a pillar of salt. His girls believe they are the last survivors on earth and commit incest with their drunken father.
4. His choices affect his earthly **finances**. Lot had much wealth. He sought more wealth in Sodom. What did he end up with? Nothing but a pile of ashes. Riches don't deliver. God delivers. Abram trusted God. He did not seek riches. He sought God. But what did Abram end up with? Joy in God as well as many riches.

Riches are not inherently wrong as long as they are controlled by the right spirit. When our "**things**" control us, then we are headed for trouble. We need to choose the Lord and the riches of wisdom and knowledge in Him.

Again, remember **Matthew 6:33**, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

If we seek our joy in Christ, we will receive it. Abram spent just enough time in Egypt to know riches didn't satisfy. So Abram walks by faith now that he's back in Canaan, and he is rewarded.

### III. Finally, we see the **reward** of faith (vs. 14-18).

#### A. Faith always has its promise of **reward**. (vs. 14-17).

1. Lot parts company with Abram, and he **misses** out on the blessing. Vs. 14.

**Verse 14a**, “The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him”.

2. Lot lifted up his **eyes** to Sodom (vs. 10-11), but God tells Abram to “lift up his eyes”.

**Verse 14b**, “Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, 15 for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. 16 I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted.”

3. Abram is given legal **ownership** of the land in **verse 17**, God says to Abram, “Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.”

In ancient times, when land was acquired by kings, they would send out people to walk it and trace its boundaries. God told something similar to Joshua at Jericho. For seven days they walked around the walls of Jericho to lay claim on the city (Joshua 6).

#### B. Faith requires us to **wait** in humble confidence that the Lord will keep His promises (vs. 18).

**Verse 18**, “So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.”

The promise is that this land is Abram's, though he personally never receives it in his life time.

**Hebrews 11:9-10; 39-40**, “By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same

promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God... 39 And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”

**Conclusion:** Based on all this what do we say about riches? Ask yourself some hard questions:

1. ***Are you generous?*** Like Abraham, Christians should be willing to give up their rights for riches in order to enrich others. Abraham, being secure in God, and being the one who should have been honored as the elder, with making the choice of land, gave up his land to the younger. He did this because his faith was in God. So he had a generous spirit. People who are walking with God will be generous. ***Are you generous?***

I don't look at the receipts, so I have no clue who gives what, but if we were to have a public accounting of giving to various things, would you be one who was generous. Remember it is not the amount of **money** that matters, but the amount of **sacrifice**. Remember the widow's two mites!

2. ***Are you content with what you have in life?*** Are you convinced that God alone brings or takes away blessing? Lot didn't see this. When he left Abram, he left the carrier of the blessing. This was the Messiah's descendent. One writer (Calvin) put it this way, “[Lot] fancied he was dwelling in paradise, [but he] was nearly plunged into the depths of hell”. Abraham by giving up the land, is promised all the land by God. God will give you blessing in His time and in His way if you trust Him. Seek Him and His kingdom first, and all the rest will be added to you. Don't follow riches. Follow God. Be content with God.
3. ***Are you a peacemaker?*** Abraham was willing to lose out for himself in order to make peace. Remember you often have to make great sacrifices to make peace. God is called the “God of peace” throughout the Scriptures. He gave His own Son to make peace between us and Him. Are you willing to be defrauded and to suffer loss for the unity of the Body of Christ?
4. ***Are you at peace with God?*** True peace and prosperity only come through regeneration in Christ. Remember peace is not secured by creating the ideal environment. Lot had the plains of Sodom that were “like the Garden of Eden”. And even the beautiful environment of Eden did not keep people from losing peace. Peace comes by surrendering your heart and will to God! Does sin torment and vex your righteous soul? If so, that is a blessing, but better than that is to choose to live separate from this world in a close relationship with the Lord.

It's so much better to have the joy of Christ than the deceitful riches and false peace of Sodom and Gomorrah!