

## Scripture Reading: Genesis 13:1-18

“Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. 2 Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. 3 And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of Jehovah. 5 Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. 6 Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell 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. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land. 8 So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left." 10 And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before Jehovah destroyed Sodom & Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. 11 Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. 12 Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom. 13 But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against Jehovah. 14 And Jehovah said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are--northward, southward, eastward, and westward; 15 for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. 16 And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. 17 Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you." 18 Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to Jehovah.”

# "God Blesses Abram"

When last we were here in the Book of Beginnings, I was pretty tough on Abram! Well, today I will only have good things to say about this Father of Nations

- And I trust we can learn some important lessons about how we should view our possessions and make our decisions today.

These accounts are an important reminder for us all that these faithful Saints were not without their faults! If you remember last time we saw how the struggles that Abram had in Egypt were like the struggles that the Apostle Paul related about himself, and all of us, in Romans chapter seven...

- I pointed out that we cannot enjoy the blessings of Romans chapter eight if we do not honestly face the struggles of Romans seven.

We should rejoice to now see Abram in the blessings of chapter eight in our text this morning & for the next two chapters: Looking to him as our example! He will have his problems again just as we all struggle in the Christian walk, but in the end he will remain faithful as should we all by God's grace. The first thing that we see in our text is how Abram comes forth from Egypt with increased riches... “very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.”

We also learn here that Lot accompanied Abram and Sarai in their trip to Egypt and they now go together back to “Bethel, ... to the place of the altar which he had made there at first.”

So Abram returns to the land he was to possess, “And there Abram called on the name of Jehovah.”

- In contrast to his sojourn in Egypt we now see Abram where he belongs and seeking Jehovah his faithful God!

**This will result in some very faithful actions on the part of Abram which will be placed in contrast with his nephew Lot...**

- **A contrast which can provide valuable lessons for us as we chose how we will walk with Jesus!**

**We will deal with Lot in much more detail in the coming weeks, but for all his warts and problems we must remember that the Scriptures in the end refers to him as righteous Lot.**

**Perhaps the best way to think of this is with the wisdom that Jesus shared in the Parable of the Sower: In this important parable, Saints are represented by “the good soil” With the seeds in the good soil we see degrees of faithfulness: Jesus told His disciples that “he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”**

**In his epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul adds to this the image of Saints building our lives on our only foundation Jesus with good materials and/or poor materials: Gold, silver and precious stones versus wood hay and stubble...**

- **The fire of judgment purifies the first and destroys the second but the Saints are saved in either case!**

**All of us will have some of both materials in our lives and the lesson we can learn from Abram and Lot is to try and focus on building on the foundation of our lives with the better materials!**

- **The bottom-line is we want to be those who produce a hundred fold rather than just thirty, or maybe in the case of Lot only five-fold!**

**In verse five we are told that Lot also had flocks and herds and tents. Here we should not think of a family camping trip or have the picture we see in most movies with nomads in small tents...**

**These men at this point had hundreds and perhaps over a thousand people traveling with them and of course a great deal of livestock. Their tents would have been like those shown in the movie Ben Hur, big enough to put on a major meal and even bring in the horses! Thus we see why there is a growing problem as they move through this land of Canaan.**

**6 “Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together.”**

**The problem begins with strife among the servants and Abram wisely wants to avoid further problems: 8 So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren.”**

**Now this presents us with a bit of a challenge as we think about church unity and our relationships with those around us... Abram’s solution is going to be that they separate so there is no further strife... It should remind us that sometimes a bit of distance can be helpful in our relationships or how at other times we just have to agree to disagree in some matters.**

**Abram rightly sees that because all of these men and women are made in the image of God AND because he and Lot are blood relatives who have been called by God to faithful service they must take steps to avoid any escalation of the tension seen in the servants. Abram wisely does not wait for what is at present a minor problem to escalate into a major problem:**

- **As we might say today, it is important to keep short accounts!**

**It is also very important to notice that as Abram considers the option of separation as the right solution, that he does so with a very good attitude!**

**In verse 9 we have Abram saying to Lot: “Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.”**

**Abram did not put forth a ‘fair’ plan but simply said, you chose first and I will take what you leave for me! Having I believe learned some important lessons about trusting God in tough situations in Egypt...**

- **We now see Abram fully willing to leave the results in God’s hands!**

**A lesson that will be VERY important when Abram later faces the greatest test of his faith in sacrificing his son. On the other hand we see Lot looking only at the here and now trying to figure out the best way to get that hundred fold increase in his own strength and wisdom...**

**10 “And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before Jehovah destroyed Sodom & Gomorrah) like the garden of Jehovah, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar.”**

**Now of course WE know the rest of the story, so we know how poorly Lot chose: But we should see in the text that Lot should have known even then:**

**11 “Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. 12 Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom. 13 But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against Jehovah.”**

**It is so easy to judge Lot harshly and yet how often do we, even as Christians “chose for ourselves” as Lot did here? The applications here could be legion, and of course the danger of making specific ones is that is it so easy to think I am speaking to someone else! But I am going to try in the hopes that we can see that it can apply not only to all of us, but in all areas of our lives!**

**As we move forward in Genesis we are going to see Abram as a very faithful Uncle, and yet here he allows Lot to make his own decision... We know that God is a greater uncle, but nonetheless in life He allows us to make some very important decisions...**

- **What do we do when God seems to be saying, which way would you like to go?**

**Wait just a minute, someone is going to say, what about God’s sovereign control of the universe and our lives!?? As we move on in Genesis, & certainly when we consider the rest of the story of salvation we will clearly see God’s control as we have from the beginning:**

- **But that does not for a second mean Abram & Lot did not have real choices to make in this situation!**

**Abram chose wisely working to avoid greater problems and in being gracious to his nephew Lot.**

**Lot on the other hand chose very poorly and he is known in all of history as one who made poor choices. His poor choices impacted not only his own life, but that of Abram, of his wife and daughters and the nations that came into being as a result.**

- **Yes, our choices are significant and we must learn to take them more seriously.**

**Abram had returned to where he was supposed to be and strove to love the Lord His God with his heart soul mind & strength in his worship & obedience!**

- **Abram ALSO kept the second great command by seeking to keep peace in the camp and by putting the needs of others ahead of his own.**

**This can be a great example for those of us who have made HUGE mistakes in the past... God is always willing to give us fresh beginnings!**

**And if those past mistakes have left some consequences in our lives, God gives us the grace to handle them as well!**

Of course the example that we want to avoid, and sadly the one we are more likely to immolate, is that of Lot. We see nothing in any of these accounts that would indicate that Lot ever put the Lord first... No he was always looking out for number one!

A proper response to Abram's generous offer would have been to acknowledge his position under Abram seeing him as an older man, as a more godly man or even showing respect as his own uncle... "Thank you for your most generous offer, but Uncle Abram what do you think would be the best place for me to settle with my people and livestock?"

- Implicit in wise decisions is seeking God's will, but God often reveals His will through those he places in our lives!

You young people are not unlike Lot: God has put you in a particular place with particular parents and particular church leaders! You have many very important decisions to make in the years ahead, so how are you going to make them? If you look out only for number one, you will look at the best places and say that is where I want to go... Even if your parents or pastor tells you it might not be wise, you will surely be able to find someone who agrees and off you go.

Looking at Lot from a worldly perspective he made the right decision: He chose the better land for his flocks and people... Sure it was near Sodom which he knew to be very sinful, but he would avoid those pitfalls. Of course once he began down that path, one thing led to another and soon we find him living in the city of Sodom and, well, we will get to the rest of the story soon enough.

- God offers great help for young people with parents and pastors and godly friends to guide them in their decisions.

But how many times does the world today declare that parents and pastors are the LAST place you should look for wisdom? Lest you think I am exaggerating, take my challenge and try to find a Hollywood movie that presents a strong father figure!

- Yes, Braveheart would qualify, but the list gets pretty short after that!
- Pastors get even less respect!

We also do it to ourselves but shutting out those with more wisdom EVEN when God specifically tells us who we are to listen too! I don't think I have to make the case that Proverbs says you children should listen to your parents! The Bible tells younger women that they should be instructed by the older women and yet we have "young mothers" groups or discussions where they specifically exclude older women because what they would have to share is not relevant.

[use the example of what a young person can know experientially]

And don't think that I am just picking on the young people here this morning. Here in our text we see wealth with both Abram and Lot. Lot looks to increase his in his own strength and Abram is willing to place peace in the Kingdom over his possessions...

- Which sounds more like what Jesus taught?

Jesus said the first would be last and the last would be first and watching how the lives of these two men work out is an ideal example of what he meant. Abram left his home country as a rich man for his time. God has now added to those riches in Egypt and we will see Him do so again and again.

God will also bless his son and grandson and of course Joseph will one day control all the wealth of Egypt. The nation of Israel will come out of Egypt, again, with vast wealth and it will continue to grow as they conquer the promised land. As we often say from this pulpit, God loves to bless His people, which certainly includes material blessings...

BUT those blessings always come with the sober warning that we find in Deuteronomy chapter six:

**“10 "So it shall be, when Jehovah your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, 11 houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant--when you have eaten and are full-- 12 then beware, lest you forget Jehovah who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”**

**So as we make our decisions about our finances, our place of employment, and our material needs...**

- **We must remember to put God first and not ourselves on the front end, AND to not forget God on the back end after He has blessed us!**

**Finally, that warning about Sodom is not just for young people... Throughout our lives, there will come times where we look out and see some sort of opportunity where it looks SO good that we don't bother to seek the Lord's guidance or heed even some obvious warnings.**

**To get ahead, how about a few after work drinks to get to know the boss better? Not only would this take away from your priorities at home in the short-term... But it opens you up to temptations that can have devastating consequences in the future.**

- **Remember, Lot did not set out to live in Sodom but that is where he ended up.**

**I guess if I was going to give a bottom-line in all of this it would be what my favorite older woman would give:**

- **The secret is to be content!**

**Lot was not content with what he had and went looking in all the wrong places for more. Abram was willing to accept whatever decision Lot made and kept his focus on God and then God reminds him of the blessings he had in store...**

**As we often see in our lives, God comes to Abram and gives him assurance that he has acted faithfully and that He will be with him, both now and down through history...**

**14 "And Jehovah said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him:**

**"Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are--northward, southward, eastward, and westward; 15 for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. 16 And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. 17 Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you."**

**We have touched on how all of these promises are fulfilled in Jesus and we will come back to that in the future. But for this morning, I want you to keep those assurances that God gave to Abram, and warnings about Lot, in mind as I close with Luke's shorter account of the Sermon on the Mount...**

**Luke 6: "20 Then [Jesus] lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh. 22 Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. 24 But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation. 25 Woe to you who are full, For you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, For you shall mourn and weep. 26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets. 27 "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. 29 To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. 30 Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. 31 And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. 32 But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even**

sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. 35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. 36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. 37 "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

### **Communion Meditation: Psalm 23**

From our readings this week, as well as a message about lots of sheep we turn to A Psalm of David:

**"Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.**

**2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures;**

**He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.**

**4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me**

**5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.**

**6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of Jehovah Forever."**