



An Adventure of Faith: Walking With Abraham

Introduction:

1. We're into our 3rd week of our study on: **An Adventure of Faith: Walking With Abraham**

- remember, this study isn't really so much about Abraham as it is the GOD of Abraham
- we're going to learn a lot from Abraham's life, but we want to focus on the hand of God at work through the life of Abraham
- Next week we'll study Genesis 14: *Getting Your Faith Stretched*

2. So far, we studied: *The Foundation of Our Faith* – we've seen

I. God's Sovereign Plan in Creation // Flood // Tower of Babel – chp. 11 // the Barrenness of Sarah (11:30)

II. God Gracious Choice in selecting Abraham through which the seed of the Redeemer would come – Gen. 12:1-3

III. God's Servant Responded in Faith and Obedience to the commands– Gen. 12:4-9

Point: In all of this, we see Abraham's "adventure" or "journey" of maturing faith.

3. Last week we studied Genesis 12:10-20—*When Gods People Blow It* (and we all do!)

- it's studies like this where we have to remember the importance of the OT teaching:

- ❖ **Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.**

I. Circumstances Provide an Opportunity to Exercise Faith in God – Gen. 12:10

- the famine in the land where Abraham dwelt was part of the sovereign plan of God
- this was occasion for Abraham to learn and to give glory to God – to get his faith stretched – instead, he blew it!

II. Wrong Thinking Leads to Wrong Actions – 12:11-13

- he went down the 'selfish trail' (i.e. putting himself first) sinful choices followed –as they usually do – so Abraham lied about Sarah

Note: Apparently, she didn't object, so she is to be help responsible to some degree as well!

Lesson: * Abraham's wrong view of God produced a fear in his heart that led to non-glorifying choices/conduct!

III. Sometimes God Blesses in Spite of Our Faith, Not Because of It

- instead of being judged or even killed by Pharaoh, God used Pharaoh to 'bless' Abram

Lesson: * This is a testimony to God's faithfulness, not Abraham's!

IV. God Exposes Our Lack of Faith – Gen. 12:17 - 20

- God didn't let Abraham get away with his sinful choice – he brought Sarah back to her husband!

- in this case, the INTEGRITY of a pagan triumphed over UNBELIEF of God's chosen person!

Lesson: * God is GRACIOUS (giving us what we *DO NOT* deserve) and MERCIFUL (withholding what we *DO* deserve).

4. Today, our study focuses on Genesis 13: *Choices Have Consequences*

- the passage deals with the separation of Abram and Lot
- it also is testimony to Abraham managing God's blessings
- and . . . while he failed in chp. 12, in chp. 13, his journey of faith takes a step of growth and he exercises his faith in a way that brings glory to God!

5. Remember, the first four verses of chp. 13 give us how Abraham responded to his failure in Egypt – he got back to the place of proper worship of the LORD

❖ **Genesis 13:3 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, 4 to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.**

- now we move into 13:5-18 [READ] – where we will see:

1. **The Challenges to Our Faith**
2. **The Choices of Faith**
3. **The Consequences of Faith**

I. **The Challenges to Our Faith – 13:5-7**

- there are two things in the Scripture that keep 'popping up' that are a challenge to us – i.e. how we respond when problems with these two issue arise – the 1st one is . . .

A. **Possessions – 13:5-6 [READ]**

5. Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. (Abraham and his tribe were around Bethel at this point – back to the same place in 12:8 – Lesson: God takes us back to the place where we fell off the track and gives us another opportunity to worship Him!, cf. v. 4) **6. And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together.** (compare this w/ 12:10 – a 'famine' was in the land; now that it's gone, the land still can't sustain the flocks of Abraham AND Lot; Notice: God is continuing to bless Abraham, remember that God had allowed Abraham even to become rich in Egypt at the expense of Pharaoh!)

- I came across a statement recently that grabbed my attention: ***Abundance not only battles for our heart, it can complicate our lives.***

- the battle in our hearts comes from do we worship the God who gives us all things or do we 'worship' what He's given us or do we allow it to control our lives?

- in this passage, Abraham was presented with a challenge and he handled it well!

- Jesus' words are true when He said:

❖ **Luke 12:15 Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."**

Ill: The people who've gone through Hurricane Katrina – New Orleans – lost everything!

- the 2nd greatest challenge is . . .

B. People

7. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. (This becomes the *means* through which God is separating Abraham and Lot. We know the end of the story that the promise would come from Abraham and Sarah's literal seed, but again, Abraham does not fully understand this yet.)

- In chapter 12, we saw that God *did not allow Abraham and Sarah to be separated down in Egypt* – now we see that God is *orchestrating the separation* of Abraham and Lot.
- If Abraham originally took Lot on the journey as a possible means through which the promise of God would be fulfilled, God now is distancing Abraham from *that* means of fulfillment

. . . the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land. (This possibly explains why the land seemed crowded—the land was not just occupied by Abraham and Lot but by the Canaanite and the Perizzite.)

Perizzite = "belonging to a village" (a people who inhabited southern Canaan prior to the conquest)

Point: There remains continuing obstacles to the fulfillment of God's promises.

- > There are not only issues with "seed" (through whom will it come) but issues with "land" (how is this going to be settled)

Lesson: * God's means of fulfilling what He says are not always clear initially!

- > That is why we must have faith. He sees what we don't and He wants us to trust Him even though there issues challenging our faith!

II. The Choices of Faith – 13:8-13

A. Grace Extended – 13:8-9

8. 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 (Though not literally brothers, they were uncle/nephew, the sense here is "kinsmen"). **9. "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."**

- Abraham, being the uncle, and the oldest, COULD HAVE made that decision - -but instead, allowed Lot the choice . . .
- > the choice revealed the heart of Lot which would later produce two very wicked nations – the Moabites and the Ammonites (cf. Gen. 19:37-38)

*** There are a couple of points to be made here:**

- 1) **God in His grace allows us to make choices; therefore, we should make sure we are making WISE choices**
- 2) **God removes the things we tend to depend on so we can focus on Him!**

- v. 10-11 give us the details about how this decision was made!

B. Process Revealed – 13:10-11

10. Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan (see map), 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 . . .

- We cannot assume that the Dead Sea area and the Southern Jordan Valley area looked then like it does today (it would NOT attract Lot's attention)
 - > Its desolate state today is a testimony to the consequences of God's judgment.
 - > Apparently before the events of chp. 19, this region looked like the Garden of Eden

– **FYI:** Other than Jericho, which is a small oasis area, this region today is desolate. There is a reason why the Dead Sea is called “The Dead Sea.” Nothing lives in it because of its salt content. .

Two factors to note about the Dead Sea area and the Jordan Valley— **(1)** The Valley is called the Jordan *Rift* Valley because it is actually a geographical fault line in the earth's crust (one of the longest on earth), **(2)** the Dead Sea is the lowest point on earth. In Gen 19 God destroys this area through divine and possibly natural—earthquake—causes. It is as if God's fist came down in this region and caused a deep hole into which all the water drains now.]

11. So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan and Lot journeyed eastward (Lot chose the choice part of the land! Naturally it would be the desired choice for most individuals—urban, lush “city living”. That is why the wicked and immoral were gathering there)

. . . **Thus they separated from each other.** (repeated in v. 14—“after Lot had separated”. The significance of this is that a potential means of fulfillment for the promise is seemingly being lost).

Point: Lot made his decision based on what his eyes saw – sound familiar? How about Gen. 3 ‘pleasant to the eyes’ (Eve's sin) – David's sin with Bathsheba, etc.

- a statement made by Chuck Swindol:

“No married couple suddenly divorces. No home suddenly fractures. No church suddenly splits. Nobody becomes a cynic overnight. Nobody makes one leap from the pinnacle of praise to the swamp of carnality. Erosion is a slow and silent process based on secret choices.” – [Simple Faith p. 165]

- > God is unfolding His plan to fulfill the promise He made to Abraham – and it's NOT going to be through Lot – he's out of the picture for now!!

C. Direction Determined – 13:12

12. Abram settled in the land of Canaan (the land of promise, an act of Abraham's faith, staying in the land of promise even while his nephew, which Abraham possibly thought was a means of fulfillment, leaves), **while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom.**

- v. 13 reveals Lot's heart – and we see the protective hand of God on Abraham
- While God was not going to use Lot as the means of fulfillment of the promise, ultimately, Lot's descendents do become two nations—the Moabites and the Ammonites (born from an incestuous relationship with his daughters)
 - > these nations harass Israel's eastern edge throughout later times.

Quote: *Everyman will ride in the chariot of God's purpose or be crushed by its wheels; but His purpose will be fulfilled!*

D. Reality Described – 13:13

13. Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.

(foreshadowing of Gen 19. When we get to Gen 19 we can explore where Lot's choices get him.)- this why v. 12 is so significant –

III. The Consequences of Faith – 13:14-18

A. God's extravagant blessings

14. The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, (note the repetition of "separation") "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward (the difference in this situation was that God TOLD Abram to lift up his eyes – God had something to show him!

15. for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. 16 "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. 17 "Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you." (God reaffirms the promise of the land, but it differs from the earlier formula by its much greater explicitness.)

1) the land is more *precisely defined*: "all ... which you see."

2) it is given to Abram as well as to his *descendants*.

3) it is given in infinity = "*forever*"

- This reaffirmation comes at a strategic time—in the midst of Abraham's challenges with (1) the land and (2) potential lost of the means to fulfill the promises..

Lesson #1: *God knows when to bless us and when to allow challenges to confront us!

- Lot "lifted" up his own eyes and looked where he wanted to look, v. 10, and chose *one select area*, God showed Abraham all the land He was going to give him and his descendants!

Lesson #2: * God has so much more in store for those who love him.

❖ 1 Corinthians 2:9 but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *WHICH* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."

- Sometimes we grasp for our seemingly "fertile valleys" here that will be destroyed, but God has an entire earth to give us!!

- Remember the words of Jesus:

❖ **Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.**

> Abraham is an example of this

B. Abraham's growing worship – 13:18 [3rd altar he built]

18. 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. (Abraham is continuing to walk in faith despite the obstacles! This is evidence by his traveling south and establishing an altar there. Now there is an altar to Yahweh in Bethel in the north and Hebron in the south. It is as if the land is being claimed for God as this nomad walks around believing he is going to get the land as he sets up altars in the name of Yahweh! Remember, the Canaanites and Perizzites are in the land and they have their gods and their claim on the land.)

Q: Do you know what the best part of this passage is?

A: It's that we see a change in Abraham.

- In the last chapter we saw Abraham taking matters into his own hands.
 - > He ran to Egypt and resorted to lies and distortions to protect himself.
- In this chapter he has a different attitude.
 - > It's interesting that Abraham's attitude changes after he has had the opportunity to worship once again at Bethel.
- If you remember, we suggested that Abraham hadn't worshipped and fellowshiped with God since the last time he was in Bethel.
 - > This absence from worship with God clouded Abraham's judgment.
- Now, having spent time with the Lord, he was seeing clearly again.
- Now he remembered that he was in the Father's hands.
 - > He remembered that his future was not something that was uncertain.
 - > God was leading the way. Abraham was able to let Lot choose because he trusted God's providence.

Closing Passage:

❖ **Philippians 2:13 For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."**

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B. _____

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A. God’s _____

Lesson #1: *God knows when to _____ us and when to allow _____ to confront us!

Lesson #2: * God has so much more in store for those who love him.

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Q: *Do you know what the best part of this passage is?*

A: _____.

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❖ _____

