



Study # 15

Genesis Chapter 13

Summary of the passage:

Genesis chapter 13 gives contrasting profiles on Abram and Lot. Abram was a leader, while Lot was a follower. Abram was a worshipper at the place of the altar, while Lot was a coveter consumed with his earthly substance. Abram desired peace among his brethren, while Lot fostered strife which got out of control. Abram allowed God to choose his dwelling place, while Lot allowed his senses to desire the land that was like Egypt. Abram was a chosen man and went on to enjoy the blessing of God, while Lot was a carnal man who chose his own path of seeming earthly prosperity only to lose God's blessing. Abram is a model pilgrim providing many lessons to Christians on discipleship, while Lot is a practical warning to all Christians that there is a heavy price to pay for missing God's will for our lives – to be governed by carnal senses leads professing Christians into a life of trouble and a loss of testimony. If we did not have the New Testament's testimony that Lot was a righteous man and vexed by sin (2 Peter 2:7-8), we might conclude that he was a hopeless case damned by the power of the world.

Key verse:

“Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom” (Ch. 13:12).

This verse declares the opposite dwelling places of Abraham and Lot. Abraham was in the very centre of God's will in Canaan, while Lot was in the place of danger, living in proximity to Sodom. Their decisions impacted their future walk with God and their future legacy for generations to come.

Observations – Lessons from this chapter.

1. **It is possible for a godly man to live for God amid earthly riches and temptations.** Although Abram went “down” to Egypt (Ch. 12:10), he went “up” out of Egypt again (Ch. 13:1). He probably gained some of his riches while in Egypt. He came back, therefore, into the land of Canaan burdened with the responsibilities of herds, servants and with silver and gold (v2). Abram's heart, however, was set on getting back to worshipping His God. He went back to Beth-el, the place of the altar, as he did when he first entered Canaan. There at Bethel, Abram “called on the name of the LORD” (v4). Worship and fellowship with God were his priority. He, therefore, did not trust in his riches, nor in the numbers of his servants and cattle. Through faith in Christ Abram was delivered from carnal confidence.

Application: – How does this apply to me?

After failure and disappointment, it is necessary to get back into fellowship with God on the terms of the blood of Christ. No one is perfect and no one is without sin (1John1:9). The secret, therefore, to communion with God and the enjoyment of His blessing is to plead God's grace on the terms of the shed blood of Christ. The Christian must go to Calvary every day by faith and he must pray for God's mercies through the merits of Jesus' blood. With his eyes firmly on the Lord's saving and keeping power through the blood, the Christian can know victory over the lusts and snares of this world.

2. **Earthly riches can be a blessing or a curse.** Sadly, we do not read of Lot joining Abram at the altar to worship God by a blood sacrifice. The words, “And Lot also” (v5) does not refer to him joining Abram in worship, but to Lot's “flocks, and herds, and tents” (v5). While Abram was able to enjoy the blessing of riches and keep his heart right with God, Lot became consumed by them (v5-6). Furthermore, the increase in flocks and herds created tension between Lot's herdsmen and Abram's. It's more difficult to herd, feed and water 1,000 animals than 100. The first animals which were led to new

pastures got the grass, and the first flocks taken the watering places got the water. Strife broke out and things became unmanageable while both Abram and Lot sought to stay together. Their riches became a cause of strife, which was difficult to solve.

Application: – How does this apply to me?

Be careful about praying for earthly riches. Material prosperity doesn't solve all the struggles of this life. Family divisions may arise all the more through increased possessions. For this reason, Agur advised, "Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me" (Proverbs 30:8). A man or woman must walk in the Spirit to use his earthly possessions aright for God. As God's steward of the blessings entrusted to you, pray for an eye to the glory of God in whatsoever you do (1Cor. 10:31).

3. **A man of grace will seek peace with his brethren.** It was Abraham who sought a way to keep the peace with Lot. He was motivated by the love of God for his fellow believer, when he said to Lot, "Let there be no strife...for we be brethren" (v8). It is to his credit that Abraham, the elder of the two, deferred to Lot offering him the first right of choice, saying, "Is not the whole land before thee?" (v9). He understood that there was no future for them as herdsmen with such large herds and flocks, so he proposed separation on the best of terms, giving Lot first choice of the land. A carnal man would have weighed up the options and fought for the most promising way. Abraham, being a man of grace, allowed Lot to decide. By this method, he ended all strife, allowed Lot to go forth agreeably and still had the blessing of God, which made him heir of true riches.

Application: – How does this apply to me?

Our responsibility to fellow believers who are of the household of faith requires us to practice self-denial. The apostle Paul pleaded that Christians should be willing to suffer loss rather than hold out for exact justice, even to the point of suffering wrong (1 Cor. 6:7). The peace of the Lord's people is of more value than earthly gain. That sounds principled and easy until there is a dollar sign attached to it! To take loss for the cause of the Lord and His church is a true test of what is in our hearts – whether it be faith in the God who can supply all our need, according to His riches in glory (Phil. 4:19), or in the uncertain riches of this world.

4. **It is dangerous to be guided by our carnal senses.** Lot's decision was based on his sight - what he beheld with his eyes (v10). No mention is made of faith. He looked eastward, beyond the Jordan river, and saw the well watered plain of Jordan, where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were located. The sight reminded him of "the garden of the LORD..." Most likely a reference to the garden of Eden. It also reminded Lot of Egypt. While Lot was in the process of making his decision of where to dwell no mention is made that the people of that plain were "wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly." That came later in the narrative (v13).

Abram, we are told, dwelled in the land of Canaan. That was the place of God's calling. There the Lord blessed him, renewed former promises and heard his prayers after Abram built another altar in Hebron (v14-18).

Application: – How does this apply to me? If we would follow Abram's example, we must be found in the centre of God's will. We need to obey God's call to do His will and then expect His blessing. Abram was honoured for his obedience through faith (Hebrews 11:8). Our obedience to the revealed will of God is the path to blessing. Note the following scriptures to see the importance of the believer's obedience: 1 Sam. 2:30, 1 Sam. 15:22, Isaiah 66:2, Zech. 7:9, Micah 6:8, John 15:7, Rev. 3:10.

Things to do in light of this study:

Memorize Genesis 13:12.

Highlight the passages in red where Abraham did well. Highlight the passages in blue where Lot acted wrongly. Note that the Bible gives us the follies and sins of people to direct our hearts away from folly. Think of yourself in a situation where you are to make a life-changing decision, then list the steps you would need to take to follow Abram's example. Then list the steps to avoid lest you end up in Lot's path of ruin.