

Abraham Separates from Lot

When Separation comes Closer to Home

Text: Gen. 13:5-18

Introduction:

1. In our last message, we dealt with the theme of separation from the world. Now we deal with Abraham's separation from Lot. This is an area of biblical separation that is in many ways is harder than separation from the world as it is much closer to home. It has to do with separation from other believers.
2. There are three kinds of people according to the Bible – Natural (unsaved), Carnal (saved but fleshly) and Spiritual (saved and Spirit-filled). Abraham would fall into the category of a spiritual man whereas Lot would fall into the category of a carnal man.
3. If it were not for the New Testament reference to the fact Lot was a "righteous" man we would be strongly inclined to view Lot as an unregenerate professor. But in reality, he presents a sobering warning to us of the kind of carnal life a true believer can lead apart from the grace of God.
4. We will study this needful separation between the spiritual (Abraham) and carnal (Lot) man under 5 headings.

I. THE CONTEXT OF THE SEPARATION (Vs. 1-5)

A. The Recent Sojourn in Egypt (Vs. 1-4)

1. Abraham is experiencing personal revival in his life. A lapse of faith had lured him into Egypt but through the gracious intervention of God, Abraham had been delivered from the Egypt sojourn and to a return to a position of spiritual victory.
2. Up until this point, Lot had willingly followed Abraham. We often read the phrase "and Lot went with him" or something similar. However, it would soon be revealed that in his heart, Lot was not prepared to allow the same reviving work to take place in his own life. Lot "seems to have been one of those men who take right steps, not because they are prompted by obedience to God, but because their friends are taking them. Around him was the inspiration of a heroic faith, the fascination of the untried and unknown; the stir of a great religious movement: and Lot was swept into the current, and resolved to go too. He was Pliable of the earlies Pilgrim's Progress." (F.B. Meyer)
3. F.B. Meyer wisely points out; "In every great religious movement there always have been, and always will be a number of individuals who cast in their lot with it, without knowing the power which inspires it. Beware of them! They cannot stand the stress of the life of separation to God. The excitement will soon die away from them; and, having no principle to take its place, they will become hindrances and disturbers of the peace. As certainly as they are harboured in the camp, or their principles are allowed within the heart, they will lower the spiritual tone; allure to worldly policy;

Begin with God - Genesis Series

suggest methods which would not otherwise occur to us; and dray us towards the Egypt-world. Nothing but supreme principle can carry any one through the real, separated, and surrendered life of the child of God. If you are prompted by anything less, such as excitement, enthusiasm, fashion, contagious example – you will first be a hindrance, and end by being a failure.”

B. The Riches Secured in Egypt (Vs. 5)

1. This is the first mention of riches in the Bible and the events that follow are instructive. The Holy Spirit highlights in this first mention of riches, the strife and heartache that riches can cause amongst brethren. Both Abraham and Lot returned out of Egypt with increased wealth. Sadly, this wealth caused more friction than blessing in their relationship. How often wealth causes problems in families!
2. We note the sowing and reaping principle here. It was a blessing that Abraham was restored from his season of backsliding in Egypt but there would be ongoing consequences to deal with.
3. We cannot blame all of Lot's demise on Uncle Abraham but acknowledging the accountability aspect of leadership means that Abraham did bear a measure of responsibility for the seeds sown in Lot's heart during the Egypt sojourn that would bear bitter fruit later on. We need to always remember that we are all influencing someone and that our decisions don't just affect us personally.
4. That said, Lot could have chosen personal revival like Uncle Abraham and gone on to victory also!

II. THE CATALYST FOR THE SEPARATION (VS. 5-7)

Conflicts such as these have a way of revealing the inner condition of the heart. They do not tend to create the problems as much as they reveal the problems already there. There were three issues at play here. There was:

A. The Presenting Issue (Vs. 5-6)

1. There was insufficient space to sustain the needs of both their families. They had outgrown the place they were dwelling in together. The fight was over material things.
2. The issue was not that the land of Canaan did not have the capacity to sustain Lot and Abraham. The issue was it was no longer possible for them to remain together in the same place.

B. The Underlying Issue (Vs. 7a)

1. Lot and Abraham were going in a different direction and were not of one spirit. The outer division was symptomatic of a division of a deeper kind. Someone wisely observed, “**The heart of every problem is the problem in the heart.**” Prov. 4:23 says that the issues of life proceed from the heart. Lot's heart was focused on wealth and worldly achievement, while Abraham wanted only to please the Lord.
2. Amos 3:3 says, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” That the division was not just confined to the herdsman is made plain by Abraham's words in verse 8 – “Let there be no strife, I pray thee, **between me and thee**, and between my herdmen and thy

Begin with God - Genesis Series

herdmen.” It is significant that Abraham mentions Himself and Lot before the herdmen.

3. Lot could not walk with Abraham because Abraham was the friend of God (2 Chr. 20:7; Is. 41:8) and Lot was a friend of the world (James 4:4).
4. There was also the matter of God’s Sovereign will for Abraham. God’s plan was to take Abraham alone from his family and make of him a great nation. First Abraham had to be separated from his father Terah (Gen. 11:31-32) and now it was time to part ways with his nephew Lot. Above it all, God was working out His Divine plan for Abraham. We do have to factor in that sometimes a parting of the ways from certain individuals is a part of God’s plan for our faith journey.

C. The Resulting Issues (Vs. 7b)

The Holy Spirit inserts an intriguing detail at this point in the narrative – “and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.” A couple of thoughts are suggested:

1. Spiritual Testimony was Compromised. Abraham had been an unashamed testimony for His allegiance to the one true God, building altars wherever he went in the land. No doubt the Canaanites were aware of this. The strife between Abraham and Lot had the potential to harm the testimony of God in the eyes of the unbelievers. A godly contention for the faith is not only important, it is commanded by God but an ungodly contention over carnal things is greatly damaging to the Christian testimony. Our love for one another is a BIG part of our testimony to the lost world. John 13:35 Jesus said, “By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have **love one to another.**”
2. Spiritual Safety was Compromised. The Canaanites were a warring people who could potentially take advantage of the weakness brought about by this division to plunder the flocks for themselves. Carnal division amongst God’s people makes the flock vulnerable to incursions by the devil!

III. THE CONDESCENSION IN THE SEPARATION (VS. 8-9)

Abraham’s response to this difficult and divisive situation highlights him as the spiritual man in the conflict. Observe two qualities about his response. It was:

A. A Spiritual Response (Vs. 8)

Abraham had a spiritual response to a carnal provocation. How important for us to follow his godly example! He was a peacemaker in the midst of this divisive situation. Abraham demonstrated:

1. The Initiative of a Peacemaker (Vs. 8a).
 - a. The **carnal man** watches on and allows carnal conflict to continue and escalate. Sadly, carnal people sometimes get a warped enjoyment out of a carnal conflict. They are warmongers rather than peacemakers!
 - b. The **spiritual man** seeks to bring such a conflict to a resolve/end. The longer such disputes go on, the worse things become! Sometimes there actually has to be a parting of the

Begin with God - Genesis Series

ways for peace to be achieved. “The beginning of strife *is as* when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.” (Prov. 17:14) There is a time and a place to discuss issues as believers and seek to resolve them. There is also a time to let a matter rest, agree to disagree, part ways graciously and move on in the will of God. Another word of wisdom from Proverbs, “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that **repeateth a matter** separateth *very* friends.” (Prov. 17:9)

2. The Intreaty of a Peacemaker (Vs. 8b). Abraham, as a spiritual man, makes a gracious appeal for a cessation of hostilities – “I pray thee”.
3. The Insight of a Peacemaker (Vs. 8c). Abraham gives a wise and insightful reason to back up his appeal – “for we be brethren”. What an example of being “sweetly reasonable”. Notice that despite the fact Lot is not in the best place spiritually, there is still a recognition that he is a part of the family. Separation from disobedient brethren is often a necessity but we should not count them as enemies but admonish them as brethren (2 Thess. 3:15).

B. A Selfless Response (Vs. 9)

1. Abraham was Self-denying. As the elder member in the family, Abraham had certain rights and privileges. Further, God had promised the land to Abraham, not Lot. However, we see Abraham surrendering rather than asserting his rights. The death to self-principle is highlighted. Abraham foreshadows Christ who surrendered His rights in order to go to the cross to provide salvation.
2. Abraham was Self-sacrificing. Abraham gives Lot the first choice of the land. A spiritual person is willing to even suffer loss if it contributes in some way to the greater spiritual objective of achieving peace. “In Egypt, Abraham put himself first. Now that he is back in Canaan and back to the altar, he put God first, others second, and himself last. Abraham did not insist on his rights. He was willing to be dead to his own rights and position.” (Wiersbe)
3. “The less of our energies are consumed in asserting ourselves, and scrambling for our rights, and cutting in before other people, so as to get the best places for ourselves, the more we shall have to spare for better things; and the more we live in the future, and leave God to order our ways, the more shall our souls be wrapped in perfect peace.” (Alexander Maclaren)
4. Illustration: William Booth sends telegram to national conference with one word message – “**OTHERS**”.

IV. THE CHOICE IN THE SEPARATION (VS. 10-13)

There is a real contrast between the choices Abraham and Lot made at this time and the consequences that came as a result of those choices. These verses concentrate mainly on Lot. We can trace 7 steps in Lot’s life from this point that led to his spiritual ruin.

A. Lot’s Temptation from Sodom (Vs. 10, 13)

Begin with God - Genesis Series

1. The Deceitful Illusions of Sodom (Vs. 10)

Deceit is at the heart and soul of temptation. Things are not as they appear! Sodom was deceitful in at least two areas and pictures the character of the world and its temptations.

 - a. Deceitful in its Assurances – Sodom’s plain appeared to offer a solution to Lot’s needs as it was “well-watered”. It seemed they would be refreshed down there near Sodom!
 - b. Deceitful in its Appearances – everything looked so incredibly attractive and good down on Sodom’s plain!
 - i. It looked like Eden – “as the garden of the LORD”.
 - ii. It looked like Egypt – “like the land of Egypt”. Sadly, this highlights that while Abraham may have gotten Lot out of Egypt, he was not able to remove Egypt out of Lot.
 - iii. How the devil and the world have a way of making sin looks so wonderful and attractive. It just looks so good on the surface! But it is all a lie and a deception.
 - c. “Sadly, Lot had been infected with the luxury and excitement of Egypt, and was no longer content to be a “stranger and pilgrim in the land”. He looked down to the plain of the Jordan River, as it flows into the Salt Sea, where there were five prosperous, exciting cities, and decided that was where he would like to be. No doubt he knew something of the wicked reputation of those cities but still chose that was where he wanted to be. Perhaps he also, like many believers today who make similar choices, rationalized that he could be a witness for the Lord there, while at the same time, enjoying the creature comforts they offered.” (Henry Morris)
2. The Depraved Iniquities of Sodom (Vs. 13)
 - a. God’s Divine perspective was very different to that of Lot’s. God saw the dark underbelly of the cities of the plain. It was a place renown for the darkest depravities known to man.
 - b. The only assessment that matters as to the moral condition of a nation and its peoples is God’s. The fact that Sodom’s sins were acceptable to the overwhelming majority in the cities of the plain did not make them acceptable to Almighty God.

B. Lot’s Decision for Sodom (Vs. 11-12a)

1. A significant choice – this was the first real choice that Lot made in his life independent of Abraham. Up till this point, he has been a follower of Abraham. There is nothing like a crossroads in one’s life where they can no longer lean on a spiritual figure in their lives to reveal the state of their heart. Lot “seems to have been one of those men who take right steps, not because they are prompted by obedience to God, but because their friends are taking them. Around him was the inspiration of a heroic faith, the fascination of the untried and unknown; the stir of a great religious movement: and Lot was swept into the current, and resolved to go too. He was like Pliable of the Pilgrim’s Progress.” (F.B. Meyer)
2. A sinful choice – Lot “chose” to walk by sight rather than by faith. Notice the sequence – Lot lifted up his eyes, beheld, desired and

Begin with God - Genesis Series

then chose. The wisest thing for us to do is to choose God's choice for us!

3. A separation choice – Lot chose more than just geographical distance between himself and Abraham; he chose spiritual distance as well. Remember, your decisions determine your destiny. “How many have stood upon those Bethel heights, intent on the same errand as took Lot thither! Age after age has poured forth its crowds of young hearts, to stand upon an exceeding high mountain, whilst before them have been spread all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them; the tempter whispering, that for one act of obeisance all shall be theirs. In assurance and self-confidence; eager to do the very best for themselves; prepared to consider the moralities only in so far as these did not interfere with what they held to be the main chance of life – thus have succeeding generations looked towards the plains of Sodom from afar. And, alas! Like Lot, they have tried to make stones into bread; they have cast themselves down from the mountain side, for angels to catch; they have knelt before the tempter, to find his promise broken, the vision of power an illusion, and the soul beggared for ever – whilst the tempter, with hollow laugh, has disappeared, leaving his dupe standing alone in the midst of a desolate wilderness.” (F.B. Meyer)

C. Lot's Direction towards Sodom (Vs. 12b)

1. Lot journeyed east from Bethel (Vs. 11a). This was in the direction of Hai (same as Ai) which means ruin or heap of ruins. We all are constantly faced with a choice of direction in our lives. Either we move towards Bethel (house of God) representing fellowship with God and spiritual blessing or we move towards Hai and the spiritual ruin and breakage that comes with compromise with the world.
2. Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom (Vs. 12b). Lot did not take up residence in Sodom straight away. He simply shifted his family in the direction of Sodom. The path of compromise usually starts out with subtil changes to begin with. Like a boat being carried along by the gentle movement of a river to begin with, the drift appears slow and gradual until it is soon seized in the powerful undertow of an approaching waterfall and soon plunged to destruction. Beware of getting caught in the world's vortex! “Like leprosy, sin has often a seemingly small beginning, but how rapid its spread, how loathsome its issue, how dreadful its end.” (Pink)
3. “Lot “pitched his tent toward Sodom”. He dwelled “in the cities of the plain” – not actually within the cities, since he still lived in his tent, but in their orbit, as it were, near enough to enjoy their advantages but not yet actually a part of their life. Christians today often follow the same path, hoping to have both the spiritual blessings of a separated walk with God and the carnal advantages of fellowship with the world. Sooner or later, however, one has to decide which it will be. He cannot have it both ways. Neither God nor the world will allow it.” (Morris)
4. “Lot is a type and illustration of the Christian who is not fully consecrated – one who is trying to make the best of both worlds,

Begin with God - Genesis Series

endeavouring to stand well with God, while pushing to the full his own earthly interests.” (Griffith Thomas)

D. Lot's Position in Sodom (14:12).

1. With what started as a seemingly innocent move in Sodom's direction soon led to actually dwelling in Sodom. Remember, **sin will always take you farther than you want to go and keep you longer than you want to stay.**
2. The New Testament brings out that Lot was vexed by the sights and sounds of Sodom as underneath, he was a righteous man who didn't really belong there. Only a saved person will truly feel vexed by sin. 2 Peter 2:7 “And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;)”
 - a. The word ‘vexed’ means to wear down, to oppress. The same word is translated ‘oppressed’ concerning Moses’ defense of the Hebrew man who was being ‘oppressed’ by the Egyptian (Acts 7:24). This is a reference to the incident when Moses saw “an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew” (Ex. 2:11-12).
 - b. It was the daily **sights** and **sounds** of Sodom that vexed Lot's righteous soul. We all have to face the vexing sights and sounds of a Sodom-like society and God can give us grace to endure it but that is very different to making a deliberate choice to place ourselves in a compromised position where we are going to be severely tempted. The separated Christian is spared so many of the world's vexatious temptations and defilements.

E. Lot's Determination to stay in Sodom (Gen. 14)

1. We will cover this chapter in our next message but to comment briefly, Lot was captured by the army of the four kings invading Sodom and its ally cities. It took the intervention of godly Abraham to see him rescued.
2. Despite this sobering chastisement, when it was all over, Lot returned to Sodom. The carnal believer despises the chastening of the Lord and stubbornly continues in his backslidden ways.

F. Lot's Promotion within Sodom (Gen. 19:1)

1. We now find Lot sitting in the gate, implying he has attained a position of leadership in Sodom. Lot had reached a level of success in the city but what a price he would pay in the long run for that “success”.
2. Lot may have been on the ascent materially but he was on the descent spiritually.

G. Lot's Ruination because of Sodom (Gen. 19)

Consider Lot's loss:

1. He lost his daughters. It appears Lot had a family of girls and only two of them left Sodom with him. The daughters that had married men in Sodom stayed behind and were lost along with their husbands.
2. He lost his house, position and wealth.
3. He lost his wife.
4. He lost his purity.

V. THE COMFORT AFTER THE SEPARATION (VS. 14-18)

Undoubtedly there was pain for Abraham in this separation from Lot and also a renewed test of faith given the fact from the human perspective it appeared that Lot had got the better end of the deal. God in His love and grace comforts and re-assures Abraham after this ordeal. Abraham was blessed with:

A. The Promises of God (Vs. 14-16)

1. The promise of a land (Vs. 14-15)
 - a. The significant timing of the promise (Vs. 14a).
 - i. This promise had special significance in light of what had just taken place in Abraham's life. God speaks to Abraham "after that Lot was separated from him". This separation, though painful, brought further blessing in Abraham's life. Sometimes the carnal Christian has to be removed so that there can be blessing.
 - ii. "Sometimes when a person does the will of God, it does not look at first like he did the right thing. The blessed results of doing the will of God do not always come quickly. The good seeds that have been planted do not always spring up as speedily as other seeds oftentimes do. This frequently discourages the faithful soul, and there are plenty of critics around who will add to the discouragement by pointing out the apparent lack of success in the life of the obedient one compare to the worlding. But be patient; truth will be vindicated; righteousness will be exonerated; and doing the will of God will be confirmed in due season." (John Butler)
 - b. The scope of the promise (Vs. 14b-15).
 - i. God instructs Abraham to "lift up now thine eyes" and to look upon the inheritance he would receive from His God. What a contrast between what the man of faith and the man of the flesh saw. Lot also "lifted up his eyes" (Vs. 10) and chose the world's wealth. Abraham let God choose for him. God calls on Abraham to see the dimensions of his spiritual inheritance. May God give us the spiritual eyes of faith to see all that we have in Christ compared to the shallow offers of the world's temporal, fleeting joys.
 - ii. We are reminded of the dimensions of God's love that we have entered into through saving grace. Eph. 3:17-19 "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what **is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;** And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."
2. The promise of a seed (Vs. 16)

Lot lost his family, but Abraham was promised a family so large it could not be counted.

Begin with God - Genesis Series

- a. Abraham's natural seed. God had promised Abraham that he would make of him "a great nation" (Gen. 12:2). Later, God would add that he would be a father of many nations. Genesis 17:5 "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for **a father of many nations** have I made thee." This was fulfilled in the nation of Israel and also the other nations that came from Abraham's seed (e.g., Ishmael's descendants).
- b. Abraham's spiritual seed. The New Testament makes it clear that this promise extends to believers who become spiritual seed of Abraham by faith. Galatians 3:29 "And if ye *be* Christ's, **then are ye Abraham's seed**, and heirs according to the promise." See also Romans 4:16-18

B. The Plenty of God (Vs. 17)

1. Abraham is invited to not only look in each direction at the magnitude of his inheritance but also to explore and enjoy it. Abraham is to "walk up and down," and, as it were, appropriate and claim for himself in detail that which God gives.
2. What a picture of the believer's inheritance. The Christian life from beginning to end is a quest to enter into a deeper and broader understanding of all we have in Christ. It is the heart's happy exploration of all our salvation riches.

C. The Presence of God (Vs. 18)

1. Abraham obeys the Lord and commences the exploration, moving to Mamre near Hebron and building a new altar. "Hebron means "fellowship" and we may apply the thought by saying that prompt whole-hearted obedience always leads to fellowship with God." (Griffith Thomas) God draws near to his separated ones.
2. 2 Cor. 6:17-18 "Wherefore come out from among them, and **be ye separate**, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and **I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you**, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Conclusion:

1. What crossroad are you standing at in your life? What choices are you making in your life right now? Where will those decisions ultimately lead you?
2. Have you already commenced similar steps to that of Lot? God's grace is available to restore you before it is too late.
3. Do you struggle with a separation that has taken place in your walk of faith within the will of God (i.e., a close family member or Christian friend)? Trust in God! His presence will comfort you and His promises undergird you.