

**TEXT: Genesis 13**

**TITLE: Worldly Lot, faithful Abram**

**THEME: While Lot chose the land of Canaan apart from the promise, Abram held fast to the promise and received a reassurance from the Lord.**

**INTRODUCTION**

Choices, decisions, every day we need to make choices. For a businessman, he knows that a choice he makes can lead him bitter or better. For a young man or woman, he/she knows that a choice he makes in front of his friends may lead him hurtful or helpful. A Christian knows that how he reacts to God may lead him corrupt or Christ-like. The reality is that life is all about choices. But the question is: how do we make choices? What is the standard by which we make choices?

Our text in front of us today draws the contrasts between two men and how they made decisions. The two men are, of course, Abram and Lot. Up to this point, they have traveled together a long way. They have traveled together since Ur of the Chaldeans. They went to Haran together. They left Haran and came to Canaan together. Although we aren't told in chapter 12 if they went to Egypt together or not, yet, in all likelihood, they did. And now they return to Canaan where both men face choices. But what is the difference between their choices? What difference does it show? What can we learn from them as we too make choices in our Christian journey? This is what we are looking at today.

Today, we will be looking at this text in three sections:

- I. Abram's offer (vv.1-9)**
- II. Lot's choice (vv.10-13)**
- III. The Lord reaffirms Abram (vv.14-18)**

**Our goal of the sermon is that you may walk this pilgrimage journey by holding fast to the promise of God and devoting yourself to a life of constant worship.**

**I. Abram's offer**

After what happened in Egypt, Abram left the land with all that he had, including the wealth he gained in Egypt. But notice what Abram did immediately after he left Egypt. Moses tells us in vv. 3-4, "*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.*" Moses tells us that Abram went from Egypt to the Negeb. Remember where was the Negeb? It was the place where Abram made the bad decision to go down to Egypt? He went back there, and from there, he went back to Bethel to call upon the name of the Lord. Remember where was Bethel? The place where he had built an altar to the Lord after the rich promises in chapter 12. Can you see what is going on here? Abram was systematically retraced his steps and reversing his tracks! This is significant! It is because this shows us how Abram was dealing with his own failures. Remember that last time we looked at how he failed to trust the Lord and abandoned the promises and went to Egypt? Here, we see that he went back to square one, the place where he worshipped the Lord in the beginning. He attempted to have a new start at the place where he began. **This is an act of rededication!** Having recognized that he was wrong in what he did in Egypt, and here, the first thing he did was to go back to the place of his dedication and worshipped the Lord.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, this is a small lesson for us as well. What Abram is doing here shows us how we should respond to our failures in our Christian walk. There are times when we trust in ourselves instead of trusting God. We do not love one another as we are called. But does failure drive you away from God, or does it drive you back to square one, back to where you started, just like Abram, back to the altar, the place of sacrifice, so you can call on the name of the Lord? So, you can ask the Lord for forgiveness, and worship him for his

grace? Brothers and sisters, repentance is an act of faith, faith in the grace of God that he will forgive us. And we know that he has forgiven us in Christ, because he loves us. So, when you fall, don't be afraid to go to the throne of grace, ask for forgiveness in Christ, and worship him.

And after returning to Canaan and worshipped the Lord, Moses immediately tells us that Abram encountered another problem. Look at v.5-7, Moses tells us *“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.”* This is interesting isn't it. If you think about it. What we saw in the last chapter is that Abram left the promised land because of the great famine. He was poor. But this time, things were the complete opposite, he was having too much that his wealth is giving him troubles! Moses tells us that his herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen were having arguments because they were fighting for water and pastureland.

And how did Abram respond to the strife? How did he choose to respond? In v.8-9, *“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. 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.’”* Think about what Abram was saying here! First of all, look at how Abram addressed Lot, he called him a “kinsman”, which means brother! As an uncle, he was humbling himself before Lot and strived to keep the peace by showing humility. More than that, as the elder and leader of the clan, Abram had every right to choose where he will live. But look at how he dealt with the problem! He deferred the opportunity to choose first and allowed Lot to choose. What a gracious response! There was strife between them, and he responded the strife with a generous action.

Can you see that Abram had really changed? What a contrast from what we saw in chapter 12! To the Egyptians he responded with a lie and scheme, this time, he chose to respond with generosity and grace for the sake of peace. Can you also see the Holy Spirit was working in his heart? How Abram was putting another before him for the sake of peace. Remember that our Lord Jesus says in Matthew 5, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” Here, we see that Abram was transformed. He was living as a child of God, he personally knew the peacemaker, thus here, we see him striving to promote peace.

And this offer also shows more – it shows that Abram trusted in the Lord this time. If you think about it, didn't the Lord promised Abram that the whole land would be his? But we see here that he did not try to hoard the land, but he decided to give Lot the choice, even the possibility of giving away the better portion of the land! This shows that he knew that the Lord could give him better even if he had given the better part to Lot. More than that, if you think about it, Abram did not yet own a single acre, but he was disposing the land as if he was the owner already. This is an act of faith! Abram really believed that the Lord would give the land to him! He was so certain that God would carry out his promise that in his mind he already was the owner of the land. What a contrast to the Abram we saw in chapter 12? There, he encountered a problem and struggled to walk as a Christian, but here, he responded very differently!

And by living in light of the promise of God, it shows us how to live by faith! You see, by trusting and holding fast to the promise of God, Abram was able to be promote peace, he was able to be generous with what the Lord gave him. He knew that everything was given to him by the Lord, under his Fatherly care. This is what we must remember as well, that we receive from God the Father before we give away anything. Living with an eye of faith means seeing the present world in light of God's promise, and all other material things are secondary.

## **II. Lot's lustful choice**

So, we see that Abram trusted in the Lord and generously offered it to Lot, how did Lot respond?

Upon hearing Abram's offer of the land, Moses tells us that 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 11 So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east.*"

But pay careful attention to the verbs "saw, took, and chose." Do these verbs ring the bell? Remember what happened in Genesis 3, after Eve "saw" the fruit and it was pleasing to the eyes, and she took it?" And in Genesis 6, the sons of God "saw" the daughters of men were beautiful, so they "took" them as wives? Here, the same verbs were used! He "*saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, so he chose...and they separated from each other*" What is going on here is that just as Eve was seduced by the fruit and the sons of God seduced by the beauty of the daughters of men, Lot also was seduced by the beauty of the land. He could not resist the temptation of the lust of the eyes, and he decided to separate from Abram.

And we have to realize essentially what he was separating himself from! Remember that a few weeks ago, we saw the promised was made to Abram. In the promise, the entire land was promised to Abram and his descendants. God was to make Abram a blessing so that others also would be blessed, especially those who are associated with him would also receive the blessing. But here, Lot was content to separate from Abram. This shows clearly that Lot did not attach much weight to the promise. His concern was to use Canaan his own way without regard to the promise and blessing given to Abram. And we know that the promise is ultimately connected to Christ. Lot wanted a Canaan without Christ, the ultimate promise to Abram. You see, Lot was not acting according to his faith. He did not think in the way of the promise that would give him a permanent blessing, rather, he looked away from the promise and left the one whose loins would come forth the promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, if we are to judge by the world's standard, people would say that Lot was having a chance of his life. He was offered a chance to live in a place where it was beautiful and with nice pasture. In the eyes of man, Lot gained the world all right. But in the process, he was putting himself in danger of losing his soul. This can also be applied to us! We can also be seduced by an opportunity and make a devastating choice. Maybe it is an offer of a career opportunity in a city where there is no Gospel-preaching church and a good Christian school. And may be a prestigious college in a city in which does not have a good church. Remember what our Lord Jesus said in Matthew 16:24-2, "*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?*"

Then also notice in v.12, look at what Moses tells us about what happened. While Abram stayed in the land promised to him, **Lot pitched his tent near the cities of the valley as far as Sodom!** And notice the comment in v.13, "*Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.*" Can you see what is going on? He not only left Abram, but he moved near the most wicked society of his age. The Apostle Peter tells us that Lot was a righteous man. But here, we see that he was putting himself in a very dangerous position! And if we look ahead, we know that Lot here made a very devastating choice, and he would later suffer the permanent consequence of his choice.

Brothers and sisters, just as we see here in the life of Lot, as people gradually move from the church, they are not moving to neutral ground but moving to the world. This is a reality. There is no middle ground! And this is a reminder for us as well. The reminder for us today is that we must never move away from the church, it is because it is a means of grace that God provided for us to edify one another and to exhort one another in love. Remember what Hebrews 10:23-25 tell us, "*23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*" This is a reminder that our Christian journey must involve one another, it is impossible to make progress in our walk without one another.

### III. The Lord reaffirms Abram

So, while we see one man walked by faith in the promise while the other walked toward a Canaan without the promise of God, how did the Lord respond to Abram's faithfulness?

The Lord said to Abram in vv.14-15, "*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.*" Notice the verbs being used here. Moses earlier tells us that Lot in v.10 lifted up his eyes and looked, then he chose...Notice the same verbs are being used here. But notice the difference this time. Last time, Lot looked with lustful and natural eyes and he was the one who chose the land that pleased him. This time, Abram was passive. The Lord told him to look and promised him to his offspring all the land he could see!

Not only that, the Lord also repeated the promises he made to him in chapter 12 to Abram, with more specific terms. That not only would the north, the south, the east, and the west would be given to Abram and his descendants, but the Lord also specified that this land will be theirs "forever." The Lord also told Abram, "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." After all, the promise is still the same. It is twofold: Abram will have an exceedingly great number of descendants and they will inherit the land of Canaan. And the Lord only repeated these promises to him simply because the Lord was reassuring Abram of his promise in order to strengthen his faith! How good is the Lord to Abram!

Then after the Lord made Abram to look at the land of promise, in v.17, the Lord told Abram to walk through the land. This means that the Lord told Abram to survey the whole land which the Lord is giving to him and his descendants. The Lord reaffirmed his promise by showing Abram the extent of his promise, that his descendants and their possession would be innumerable! What a gracious promise! And we know that the promise would be fulfilled later as the Israelites would inherit the land of Canaan, but that's not all. It is because the land of Canaan is only a type of the better Canaan. The Apostle Paul tells us in Galatians 3 that those who are in Christ are the children of Abraham, and that includes the Gentiles, you and me! And one day, all those who are in Christ will inherit the heavenly Canaan, where all the children of Abram will dwell forever.

Finally, what did Abram do in response to God's reassurance? Once again, Moses tells us that he built an altar to the Lord! **Remember that what this means – worship!** After hearing what the Lord said to him, Abram responded with worshipping the Lord again. Remember that after the Lord made to him the promises in 12:8-9, Abram responded with worship. And earlier in this chapter, after he returned to Canaan from Egypt, he worshipped the Lord, and now, he was worshipping the Lord again! **He worshipped the Lord because he believed.** According to the book of Hebrews, Abram looked in faith beyond the land to the thing it represented, the author of Hebrews describes, "Abraham looked forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10). In other words, Abram's eyes of faith pointed him further than just the physical land that he would inherit, but an eternal city, where he would dwell forever!

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, this is an application to us as well. Like Abram, we are pilgrims in this world. We too are looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Heb 11:10). But as we are on the journey home, we are currently living in the world full of temptations and sins. Satan is trying to seduce us constantly. And this is a reminder that we may resist the Devil by holding fast to Christ through his church, and to diligently dedicate and give ourselves to the worship of God. This also reminds us the importance of public gathering of worship. When we are gathering with other believers with the same hope, not only is our faith strengthened but we are more joyful to walk this journey of faith.

In closing, let me ask you: are you walking by sight?

Or are you walking by faith? Are you trusting daily in God and in the Christ? Are you living in light of his word? Like Abram, are you trusting in his promises, keeping his law, and living according to his truth?

Brothers and sisters, if we are truly walking by faith, we will find ourselves like Abram, who is also found at the altar, giving glory and praise to the Lord. Remember these words of the Apostle Paul, 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, "*So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.*"

Amen. Let us pray.