

Genesis 13
Return to Righteousness

I. Return

A. ***13:1 So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb. 2 Now Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. 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 on the name of the LORD.***

B. We saw the significance of these verses last week. Abram has finally returned to Bethel (House of God). He is back to where he should be.

C. We also learn from these verses that Lot had accompanied him. The emphasis shifts slightly in the chapters ahead to Lot and “the Lot Problem.” Again recall that Lot should never have been along in the first place. God had commanded Abram to *Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.* (Gen 12:1). Having Lot along leads to two problems: One for Abram, one for Lot.

1. Abram runs into trouble as we shall see in that the land cannot support both Lot and Abram. It was not intended to.
2. Having Lot along seems to have corrupted him. In particular the sojourn in Egypt seems to have corrupted Lot. Thus Abram’s fall has affected Lot, a reminder that our own sins usually affect others. Perhaps too and as a result, Abram dotes a bit too much on Lot and becomes an enabler of Lot’s bad behavior. It is not a very healthy relationship at any rate.

II. Result -

A. ***5 And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, 6 so 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 cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites dwelt in the land.***

B. Here is described the first problem of Lot’s presence. The land cannot support both Lot and Abram.

C. That they are bloated with wealth only compounds the problem. Many think of worldly wealth only as a blessing. But it comes at a cost. Wealth can weigh us down and prevent us from receiving truth blessings:

1. *Mat 19:23 And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*

2. Luke 6:24 *"But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. "Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger. "Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.*
3. 1 Tim 6:9 *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs.*
4. Eccles 5:12 *The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep.*

D. ***At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites dwelt in the land.*** - Their presence is only mentioned in passing here. Centuries later they will have to be driven from the land.

III. Resolution -

- A. ***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."***
- B. Here is a sign that Abram is recovering his faith. As the senior of the two he had the right to choose which land as his. But magnanimously he allows Lot the choice. Perhaps Abram is trusting God as to the ultimate result?
- C. ***Separate yourself from me.*** - Their physical separation fulfills God's original design. But as we shall see, physical separation does not lead to a complete separation. Abram will still have to deal with Lot and their problematic interaction will continue to divert Abram.
- D. We shall see in the chapters ahead that Lot's choice brings him ruin. Abram's trust brings him blessing.

IV. Rapacity -

- A. ***10 And 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, in the direction of Zoar; this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. 11 So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan valley, and Lot journeyed east; thus they separated from each other. 12 Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, while Lot dwelt among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.***
- B. Here the greed of Lot is portrayed. He chooses all the best land for himself.

- C. The implication of verse 10 is that the Dead Sea did not yet exist and that the Jordan Valley extended south as a lush green area. There were also cities in this region among them, Sodom and Gomorrah. The names of these cities literally mean “scorched” and “ruined (heap)” Hence these were not likely their original names.
- D. ***like the land of Egypt*** - this phrase implies that although Lot had gotten out of Egypt, it was a different matter to get Egypt out of Lot. This region reminds him of Egypt. Remember that in the Bible Egypt is not just a place it is a mind set; it is the world. We shall see that Lot is attracted to a land of great wickedness. Is it the wickedness that attracts him?
- E. Abram is left with the highlands. Not perhaps the most attractive from a worldly perspective but perfectly able to sustain him, in terms of his needs. The life of sin may appear more glamorous and seem to pay immediate rewards, but ultimately it leads only to trouble as we shall see.
- F. ***Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.*** - Not much information is given here as to the nature of their wickedness. We learn later that among their wickedness is sexual perversion and exploitation.¹

¹Gen 19:5 and the men of Sodom called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, ⁷ and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly.

V. Reiteration -

- A. *14 The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; 15 for all the land which you see I will give to you and to your descendants for ever. 16 I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your descendants also can be counted. 17 Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you." 18 So Abram moved his tent, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron; and there he built an altar to the LORD.*
- B. God renews his commitments to Abram now that he is back where he should be and without Lot. He promises him the Land and innumerable descendants. The exact boundaries of the Land are not clear here but a later biblical text in Chapter 15 spells it out more clearly.² A later text to Moses seems to change things a bit, limiting the Eastern boundary to the Jordan River (Zoar)³ and a Western Boundary closer to Gaza and Negev. Such texts are dispute even today.
- C. The point here is that God will bless Abram for his fidelity. Lot will suffer for his selfishness as we shall see.

²Gen 15:"To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, 19 the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

³Deut 34:And Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, 2 all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, 3 the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. 4 And the LORD said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there."