Sunday, June 9, 2019

Lesson: Genesis 13:10-18; Time of Action: 2090 B.C.; Place of Action: Canaan

Golden Text: “And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever” (Genesis 13:14-15).

I. INTRODUCTION. Lot’s separation from Abram alienated him from blessing. He turned his back on his uncle and ignored the dangers of Sodom. But even as he thought he was living in heaven, he had already sunk almost into hell. In contrast to Lot, Abram trusted God and by faith he inherited “all the land. . . forever” and “offspring as the dust.”

II. LESSON BACKGROUND. God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans (see Genesis 11:31; 15:7; Acts 7:23) and led him and his family to Haran. While there, the Lord commanded Abram to go to a land that He would direct him to while declaring “I will cause you to become the father of a
great nation; I will bless you and make your name famous, and you will be a blessing to many others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you; and the entire world will be blessed because of you” (see Genesis 12:1-3). So Abram, who was seventy-five years old at that time, departed as the Lord had instructed him, taking his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—the cattle and slaves he had gotten in Haran—and finally arrived in Canaan. This area was already inhabited by Canaanites at that time. Then Jehovah appeared to Abram and said, “I am going to give this land to your descendants.” And Abram built an altar there to commemorate Jehovah’s visit (see Genesis 12:4-7). There was at that time a terrible famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to live. After God had to intervene as a result of Abram deceiving Pharaoh about Sarai (see Genesis 12:10-20), he and his family left Egypt and returned to Bethel in Canaan where he had camped before, between Bethel and Ai—the same place where he had built the altar. And there he again worshiped the Lord (see Genesis 13:1-4). But the region around Bethel was not large enough to contain the herds of both Lot and Abram (see Genesis 13:5-6). As a result, friction erupted between the herdsmen of Abram and those of his nephew Lot posing Abram with a decision regarding the scarcity of land (see Genesis 13:7). Abram, desiring to be a peacemaker and not a troublemaker, decided to resolve the issue peacefully. He generously offered Lot his choice of the land that was before them (see Genesis 13:8-9). This is where our lesson begins.
III. THE CHOICES MADE (Genesis 13:10-13)

A. Lot’s choice of land (Genesis 13:10-11).

1. (vs. 10). Our first verse says “And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.” After Abram gave “Lot” the chance to choose which part of the land he wanted, “Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where.” He took a long look at the fertile plains of the “Jordan” River and saw that it was well watered everywhere. This described the condition of that area “before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.” The cities of “Sodom and Gomorrah” were two of five city-states in the area of the land that Lot viewed (see Genesis 14:8). The land was also described as being “even as the garden of the Lord,” a reference to the Garden of Eden. The land was so fertile that it was like the Garden of Eden and also “like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.” This part of the land was at the south end of the Dead Sea. “Zoar” which means “little” was a small city that would play a prominent part in the story of Lot and the destruction of the wicked “cities of the plain” which included “Zoar” (see Genesis 13:12; 19:29). However, “Zoar” was spared the destruction because “Lot” took refuge there (see Genesis 19:15-29). Note: There are two things that we notice about Abram in this situation. First, Abram lived for others, not for himself. It is true
that while in Egypt, Abram thought about himself first (see Genesis 12:12-13), but when he returned to his altar in Canaan (see Genesis 13:1-4), he put God first and others next. As the “elder statesman” of the camp, Abram had every right to decide the issue and tell Lot what to do, but he gave Lot the first choice. Abram demonstrated Romans 12:10: “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another.” The spiritual Christian does not insist on his or her own rights but gladly yields to others.

Second, Abram lived by faith, not by sight. No matter what Lot did, Abram was not worried about his future, for he knew that everything was in the hands of the Lord. Abram had never read Psalms 47:1-4 or Matthew 6:33, but he was putting both into practice by faith. He had met God at the altar he had built, and he knew that everything was under control. When God is first in your life, it makes no difference who is second or last. Outlook helps to determine outcome. Abram’s eyes were on the Holy City of God (see Hebrews 11:8-10, 16), and he went on to walk with the Lord and inherit blessing. Lot’s eyes were on the sinful cities of men, and although he went on to worldly success (see Genesis 19:1), he also suffered spiritual failure, and a shameful end (see Genesis chapter 19; II Peter 2:6-8).

2. (vs. 11). This verse says, “Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.” After Abram gave him the freedom to choose the area he would settle in, “Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan;
and Lot journeyed east.” So Lot chose the most fertile land in the Jordan Valley which was to the east of Bethel where they were at that time. Lot went eastward with his flocks and servants (see Genesis 13:5) “and they separated themselves the one from the other.” In other words, Abram and “Lot” parted company. Note: Life is a series of choices. We too can choose the best while ignoring the needs of others. But this kind of choice, as Lot’s life shows, leads to problems. When we stop making choices in God’s direction, we will make choices in the wrong direction. Lot had a great opportunity to become a man of God as he walked with Abram, but we don’t read that Lot built an altar, as did Abram, or that he called on the Lord. But notice Lot’s spiritual regression. First, he looked toward Sodom (see Genesis 13:10); then he moved toward Sodom (see Genesis 13:11-12); and finally, he moved into Sodom (see Genesis 14:12). Instead of being a pilgrim who made progress, “Lot” regressed into the world and away from God’s blessing (see Psalms 1:1). He “journeyed east” and turned his back on Bethel “which means house of God,” and turned toward Hai or Ai which means “ruins” (see Genesis 12:8). The people in Sodom may not have appeared wicked to “Lot,” but they were wicked as far as God was concerned, and His evaluation is all that matters.

B. Abram’s choice of land (Genesis 10:12-13).

1. (vs. 12). This verse says “Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the
plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.” This verse summarizes the choice of dwelling places made by “Abram” and “Lot.” We are told that “Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan.” This is where God directed “Abram” to go and he obeyed (see Genesis 12:1, 4-5). Having failed a test of faith when he went to Egypt because of the famine in Canaan (see Genesis 12:10-20), Abram was not about to move again without God’s direction. Certainly, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way” (see Psalms 37:23). Note: Just like Abram’s move to Egypt was a test for him, so was his decision to let Lot choose where he wanted to settle down. Abram was a man of faith, but a faith that can’t be tested can’t be trusted. Peter compared the Christian’s trials to the testing of gold in a furnace (see I Peter 1:7), and the patriarch Job used the same image when he said, “But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold” (see Job 23:10). God’s purpose in allowing trials is not only to verify our faith, but also to purify it and remove the dross. God knows what kind of faith we have, but we don’t know; and the only way to advance in the “school of faith” is to take examinations or tests. Like Abram, as we progress in the “school of faith,” we will face three special tests: circumstances (see Genesis 12:10), people (see Genesis 12:11-13:4), and things (see Genesis 13:5-18). Are you advancing in the “school of faith?” In order to do so, you must have, and pass some tests. As a result of his choice, “Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.” While Abram remained at Bethel, “Lot” lived among “the cities of the plain,”
settling at a place near the city of “Sodom.” Lot’s character is revealed by his choices just as our will be. He took the best share of the land even though it meant living near “Sodom,” a city known for its sin. “Lot” was greedy, wanting the best for himself, without thinking about his uncle Abram’s needs or what was fair. **Note:** Sensual or fleshly choices are sinful choices, and seldom if ever lead to good things. Those who do not consider what’s in the best interests of their souls and their faith when choosing relationships, callings, dwellings, or settlements and are guided and governed by the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, or the pride of life (see I John 2:16), cannot expect God’s presence with them, nor his blessing upon them. More often than not they are disappointed even in the choices that they made. In all our choices this principle should overrule us: what is best for us is best for our souls.

2. (vs. 13). This verse says “But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.” This verse prepares us for the problems Lot would face in the area that he chose as well as what would eventually happen to “Sodom.” Although the name “Sodom” is used here alone, it includes Gomorrah and also refers to the five city-states in that area where Lot settled (see Genesis 14:8; 13:12; 19:29). We are told that “the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.” The inhabitants of “Sodom” were so wicked that Isaiah compared the sins of Judah to the sins of “Sodom” (see Isaiah 3:9). The prophet Ezekiel said that the iniquity or sin of “Sodom,” was “pride, fullness of bread, and
abundance of idleness...” (see Ezekiel 16:49). “Sodom” is also an example of how God sometimes gives great plenty to great sinners. The Sodomites who were “wicked and sinners” dwelt in a city, in a fruitful plain, while faithful Abram and his pious family dwelt in tents upon the barren mountains. But we should not be discouraged at this because “Sodom” is also an example of the fact that when wickedness reaches its height “before the Lord exceedingly,” ruin and destruction is not far off. Abounding wickedness and sins are sure indications that judgment is coming. **Note:** Here is something to think about. It’s quite possible that Lot’s coming to live among the Sodomites may have been a sign of God’s great mercy to them as a means of bringing them to repentance.

For now the Sodomites had among them a preacher of righteousness (see II Peter 2:6-8), and if they had hearkened to him, they might have been reformed, and their ruin prevented. God sends preachers, before he sends destroyers; for he is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (see II Peter 3:9). But instead, the Sodomites were a great affliction to “Lot,” who was not only grieved to see their wickedness (see II Peter 2:7-8), but was molested and persecuted by them, because he would not do as they did. Too often good men and women are troubled because they have found themselves living among wicked people as “Lot” does here. But they can’t blame anyone else for their troubles because they have brought it upon themselves by an unwise choice. As believers, it behooves us to follow the Apostle Paul’s words to the Corinthian church: “Be ye
not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (see II Corinthians 6:14).

IV. THE COVENANT CONFIRMED (Genesis 13:14-16)

A. The land is given to Abram (Genesis 10:14-15).

1. (vs. 14). This verse says “And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward...” In this verse we have an account of a gracious visit which God paid to “Abram” to confirm the covenant promise to him. This visit by “the Lord” came to Abram “after that Lot was separated from him.” It was only after Abram’s humble self-denying surrendering to “Lot” for the preserving of peace that God came to him with this token of His favour. After “Abram” had lost the comfortable fellowship of his kinsman “Lot,” by whose departure his heart had to be saddened, God came to him with these good and comforting words. “The Lord” spoke to “Abram” saying “Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward...” God here shows “Abram” the land that He had promised (see Genesis 12:1), similar to showing it to Moses from the top of Pisgah (see Deuteronomy 34:1-3). “Lot” had lifted up his eyes and beheld the plain of
Jordan (see Genesis 13:10), and went to enjoy what he saw. But God tells “Abram” to lift up his eyes and see all the land that he will own, “northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward…” Lot had lifted up his eyes and seen what the world had to offer; now God invited “Abram” to lift up his eyes and see what heaven had to offer. Whatever God has to show us is infinitely better and more desirable than anything that the world has to offer our “eyes.” What the “eyes” of faith see are much richer and more beautiful than what the “eyes” of the senses see. As believers, we look at the “things which are not seen” as real even though they may be far off (see I Corinthians 4:18).

2. (vs. 15). This verse says “For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.” God told Abram that He was giving him “all the land” that he could see. The Lord gave it to Abram and his “seed for ever.” This was another confirmation of the Abrahamic Covenant God made with Abram (see Genesis 12:1-3). God said “to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.” The land was not given to Lot and his seed; they were not to have their inheritance in this land. Therefore, Providence ordered that Lot should be separated from Abram first, and then the covenant should be confirmed to Abram and his “seed” or descendants. God often brings good out of evil, and makes men’s sins and follies subservient to His own wise and holy counsels. The giving of the land to Abram and his descendants forever implies that the land was a type of the heavenly Canaan, which is given to the spiritual “seed” of Abram “for ever” (see Hebrews 11:10, 16). Note: Lot chose a piece of land, which he finally lost, but God
gave Abram the whole land, which still belongs to him and his descendants. In essence Lot had said, “I will take this land,” but God said to Abram, “I will give you this land.” What a contrast! Lot lost his land (see Genesis 19:29-30) and his wife (see Genesis 19:26), but Abraham was promised a family so large it could not be counted. Remember, Abram and Sarai were old and had no children. Lot was living for the possible, but Abram was trusting God for the impossible.

B. The promise of a natural posterity is given to Abram (Daniel 10:16). This verse says “And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.” Here God promises Abram a innumerable amount of descendants so that this good land would never lack Abram’s heirs. God said “And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth.” This was also true during the time of Solomon (see I Kings 4:20) and Abram’s “seed” will continue to grow through those who accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Regarding Abram’s “seed” or descendants, the Lord went on to say that “if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.” Now that’s a lot of people! Not only would the Jews be descendants of Abram, but the Arabs as well through Ishmael, Abram’s son by Hagar, Sarai’s handmaid.

V. THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE LAND (Genesis 13:17-18)
A. God’s directions to Abram (Genesis 13:17). This verse says “Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.” God had told Abram to lift up his eyes and look (see verse 14). Now in essence God says “lift up your feet and walk.” In other words claim your inheritance by faith (see Joshua 1:1-3; Deuteronomy 11:24). God commanded Abram to “walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth (or width) of it.” Whether Abram walked all over the land of Canaan, we don’t know. But according to the next verse 18, he did get up and move to the plains of Mamre. This indicates that Abram believed God and had faith that He would keep His word. **Note:** It is our faith in God that determines how much of His blessing we will enjoy. When we trusted Jesus Christ as our Savior, God gave us “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (see Ephesians 1:3). As a result, even though we don’t see it with the naked eye, we have our inheritance right now (see II Corinthians 4:18)! All we need to do is take hold of that inheritance by faith and draw on God’s “riches in glory” (see Philippians 4:19). The Word of God is the “will” that tells us how rich we are, and faith is the key that opens the vault so we can claim our inheritance.

B. Abram worships The Lord (Genesis 13:18). Our final verse says “Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord.” In response to God’s direction to walk through the land, we are told that “Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in
the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron.” The term “Mamre” means “firmness” and “the plain of Mamre” was noted for its oak trees. It was located in the city of “Hebron.” East of “Mamre” was Machpelah, a field purchased by “Abram” to bury Sarai (see Genesis 23:17-19). Also buried there were Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah (see Genesis 49:31; 50:13). After “Abram” arrived “in the plain of Mamre” he “built there an altar unto the Lord.” Not only did Abram lift up his eyes and look (see Genesis 13:14), and lift up his feet and walk (see Genesis 13:17), he also lifted up his heart and worshipped God and thanked Him for His gracious blessing. He pitched his tent from place to place as God led him, and he “built” his “altar” of witness and worship. The people in Sodom were proud of their wealth (see Ezekiel 16:49), but “Abram” had spiritual wealth that they knew nothing about. He was walking in fellowship with God, and his heart was satisfied.

VI. CONCLUSION. Satan wants to use circumstances, people, and things to tempt us and bring out the worst in us. But God also wants to use those same things to test us and bring out the best in us. Abram failed the test when he left Canaan and went into Egypt because he resorted to faith in man’s wisdom instead of faith in God’s Word. But he passed the test when he returned to Canaan with great distinction because he let God take control. “…and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (see I John 5:4).
Sunday, June 9, 2019: “Dwelling in Canaan” Commentary (UGP Curriculum)

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