

## Genesis 13:5 – 18

<sup>13:5</sup> Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. <sup>6</sup> And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together. <sup>7</sup> And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land. <sup>8</sup> So Abram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. <sup>9</sup> Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left.' <sup>10</sup> Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere – this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah--like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. <sup>11</sup> So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. <sup>12</sup> Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom. <sup>13</sup> Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD. <sup>14</sup> The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, 'Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; <sup>15</sup> for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. <sup>16</sup> I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. <sup>17</sup> Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.' <sup>18</sup> Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

### Historical and Cultural Background

- Altars: Abram built altars in the places he encountered God, so far in Shechem (Gen.12:7) and on a mountain between Bethel and Ai (Gen.12:8). In the last section, Abram's departure from that mountain and return there (Gen.13:4) is a story of personal fall and redemption from which he learned something about God's character and faithfulness.
- Sodom and Gomorrah were later destroyed by God (Gen.19). What were their sins? Ezekiel said, 'Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy' (Ezk.16:49). Jude writes that the men of Sodom and Gomorrah 'indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh' (Jude 7, referring to Gen.19).

## Questions

1. What clues in the text do we have for how Abram thinks about this conflict between Lot and him?
  - a. The herdsmen of both men were having strife with each other, but Abram says that it is a strife between 'you and me' (13:8)
  - b. Abram seems aware that the 'Canaanite and Perizzite were dwelling then in the land' (13:7). He does not want them to observe conflict happening between Lot and himself, especially over the land. He cares about his witness to them. Remember the fact that Abram pitched his tent on the top of a small mountain between Bethel and Ai, built an altar on top of that mountain so that people around him could see him worship God.
  - c. Application: What is the cost of a conflict to your witness?
2. What do you think about how Abram treats Lot?
  - a. He personalizes the conflict. He doesn't just relegate it to their hired hands.
  - b. He calls Lot a 'brother' even though Abram and Lot are uncle and nephew. He does not pull age or rank, although he probably easily could.
  - c. What does the word 'brother' remind you of, in the Genesis story? Cain and Abel. Note how this story is a reversal of Cain and Abel.
  - d. Abram is quite generous. He gives Lot the first pick of where to go.
  - e. He does not presume that God's promise of his descendants inheriting the land should affect the decision. He does not pull spiritual claims.
3. When Abram separates from Lot, how is Abram interpreting God's promise to him, up until 13:11?
  - a. Is Abram including Lot and Lot's descendants as part of his own descendants? That's possible.
  - b. Is Abram assuming that God will sort out the question of how Abram's descendants will eventually inherit the land that Lot chose? That's possible, too. Hard to know which one. Does it matter?
4. What do you think of Lot's choice?
  - a. How does the Jordan River valley look to him?
  - b. What conflict do you anticipate for Lot?
  - c. If there were music playing and if this were a movie, what music would you expect to hear? Ominous. Lot made a bad choice.
  - d. He made a choice by 'sight' like Eve and Adam made a choice to eat the fruit by 'sight.' He does not perceive the spiritual danger posed by Sodom and Gomorrah, it seems.
  - e. Application: How does wealth cloud your spiritual perception?
5. Then God speaks to Abram again in 13:14 – 17. What do you think of what God says?
  - a. He promises Abram the land again, even though Lot is going to occupy it in the short term. That's interesting!
  - b. Application: How does looking ahead into God's future enable us to be generous? For Abram, he was learning that God was faithful to his promises, and will keep his promise to Abram's descendants. For us, we learn that God will restore the whole world with his healing power, because he is keeping his promise to Jesus his Son. So, we will inherit the whole earth (e.g. Mt.5:5). That frees us up from having to enjoy everything now, travel everywhere. Jesus will be a far better host and tour guide for all eternity, than we can have here in this time!
  - c. Application: Name one thing you can let go of, right now, and entrust that God will bless you even more in his own time.