

Lot to Moves Toward Sodom; The Lord Confirms His Promises to Abraham

Genesis 13:10-18

Genesis 13:10-18: *“And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. ¹¹ Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. ¹² Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom. ¹³ But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD.*

¹⁴ And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: “Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; ¹⁵ for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. ¹⁶ And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. ¹⁷ Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.” ¹⁸ Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the LORD.”

Background Notes

When you stand on the high ground near ancient Bethel in Israel and look southeast, you will see the “well-watered plains of the Jordan.” It’s green and lush in the Jordan River valley, compared to the adjacent arid Judean wilderness. When Abram, the man of faith, generously gave Lot the first choice, Lot saw that lush valley and the plains of the Jordan, and he couldn’t resist the allure of that rich pastureland. It seems that Lot didn’t even consider the implications of what his move towards Sodom would mean to his own faith and the future of his family.

By the way, don’t get the idea that if Lot had made a different choice, Abram would have been forced to move towards Sodom! No. Both of them could have stayed in different places in the hill country - there was plenty of land there. *“Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.”*

After Lot made his choice, the Lord reconfirmed the Abrahamic Covenant He had made with Abram: His promise of the Land (v15&17) and many descendants (v16). *“And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered.”* In other words, Abram’s descendants would be innumerable! That promise has come true. It will continue to be true through human history,

because God has never revoked or changed that unconditional promise or covenant to Abraham. Any attempt to do away with the descendants of Abraham has met with failure.

Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the LORD” (v18). Abraham moved to the high ground of Hebron. There he continued to walk in fellowship with the Lord. In fact, the name *Hebron* means “association,” or “alliance,” or even “fellowship. “

Doctrinal Points

1. The spiritual believer makes choices on the basis of faith.

Verse 9: *“Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.”*

Abram was able to be generous because he was a man of faith, and he believed the promises of God. God had promised the whole land to his descendants (Genesis 12). Abram believed this promise, and thus he let Lot make his choice. Abram didn't have to worry. He knew that God was in control, no matter what Lot's choice was. His life was in God's hands.

Abram was able to make choices on the basis of his faith in God. Listen to what Hebrews 11:9-10 says about Abram: *“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”*

So you see, it didn't matter what Lot's choice was. Abram was walking by faith and resting in the promises of God - and that's the way it should be in our lives. The spiritual believer makes choices on the basis of faith.

Here's an illustration: At the present time our older son and his wife are considering a job change. It would involve a major move. They have prayed about this and they have used their God-given common sense. They have done all the paperwork, and now they're waiting. But they're not anxious! They're not afraid that someone else will get the job - and they'll be content to stay with the present job. Why are they not anxious? Because by faith, they believe God's promise to guide and direct them.

God has promised guidance to us as believers - in many places! How about Proverbs 3: 5-6: *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and don't depend on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.”* Do you believe what that verse says? The spiritual believer makes choices on the basis of faith.

2. The carnal believer makes choices on the basis of “sight.”

In Scripture, Lot is a picture of a carnal or worldly believer. Verse 5 says, *“Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents.”* What item was obviously missing? No altar, right? Abram had an altar - he had come back to the place of the altar. And *“Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents”* - but no altar!

We know Lot was a believer - 2 Peter 2 tells us that Lot was definitely a believer. But Lot was not a spiritual believer who was walking by faith. Lot was a carnal believer who was walking by “sight.” *“And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere... like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan...”*

Lot should have given Abraham the first choice. Abraham had the right to choose first: he was the older of the two, and he was the patriarch of the family. But greedy and selfish Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the well watered plain of Jordan. Lot didn't choose on the basis of faith, and he didn't think ahead about the possibilities of the bad fallout from living near Sodom.

He didn't consider his family. He didn't consider that the wickedness of Sodom was bound to affect his family if he moved in that direction. And Lot didn't move into Sodom as a missionary - he moved into Sodom for his own selfish reasons. His decision was not based on faith, but on sight. Notice by the way, that Abraham didn't lift up his eyes until the Lord told him to (v14). Definitely a contrast there!

What about our choices? Do we “lift up our eyes” and make our choices based on what looks good for us at the moment? Or do we, by faith, make decisions based on the promises and commands of the Word of God and the guidance of the Lord? Do we really believe 1 John 2:17 which says, *“the world is passing away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever”*? 2 Corinthians 5:7 teaches us that *“we walk by faith, not by sight.”* The spiritual believer makes choices on the basis of faith, but the carnal believer makes choices on the basis of sight.

Practical Application

Don't travel the road to failure!

Lot's life story is not pleasant. Step by step he traveled the road to failure. He moved down to the Jordan Valley, lived near the cities of the plain, and moved his tents towards Sodom. In chapter 14 Lot moved into Sodom. Perhaps he married a woman of Sodom. He raised his family in Sodom. By the end of chapter 19 Lot had lost everything, including his wife, in the destruction of Sodom. He was drunk, and was committing incest with his two daughters. What a sad and disastrous ending on the road to failure.

If we had warned Lot that it wouldn't be long before he would move into Sodom, and that he would lose his wife and home, and end up in moral degradation, I'm sure Lot would have said, "No way! I'll never move into wicked Sodom! I'm only going to those lush plains of Jordan for good pasture for my flocks and herds. Maybe I'll even be a testimony to the Lord there!" Lot might even have said, "Look down there, it looks like the garden of the Lord. This move must be God's will!" But it was **not** God's will - it was the road to failure. Before long, Lot was desensitized to the sin of Sodom, desired the wealth of Sodom, and moved into Sodom.

Just as the life of faith is a step-by-step process, the road to failure is a step-by-step process as well. The first step in his travel on the road to failure was a look. "*Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere.*"

A "look" was the first step on the road to failure in King David's life as well. 2 Samuel 11:2: "*One evening David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold.*" He **looked**, he saw a beautiful woman - and he stepped out onto the road to failure.

Let's be careful to walk by **faith** and not by **sight**! Sight alone can be misleading. Watch out for things that **look** like "the garden of the Lord"! Are we **looking** with desire at the wealth of this world - and moving away from Bethel, the house of God. Are we flirting with temptation? Are we pitching our tents toward Sodom and the wickedness of this world?

Watch out for the entanglements of "the good life"! Do we make our choices selfishly, for what we can gain? In our decisions on jobs and location, do we check to see if there's a good church and Christian fellowship in a new location? Do we take our children into consideration - what kind of education they'll get, and what relationships and involvements our move will encourage for them?

A Christian couple we know encouraged their daughter to continue in a relationship with a non-Christian man because he was successful and wealthy. It **looked** like a "good" marriage for her. Sadly, they now bitterly regret that decision. Watch out! Don't travel the road to failure!