

Genesis 13:1-12 – A Test of Faith: For Things Not Seen

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Calvin, PASN, Henry, Pulpit, Geneva, Poole, Trapp, Delitzsch,

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Abram, like you today, was called to spread the odor 芳香 of this faith. But as he moved around Canaan, he found himself under many trials of his faith. Some of them he won, some he lost. He lost his last test of faith when he ran away to Egypt and Pharaoh had to rebuke 责难 him for his lies and exposure of his wife to sin. Yet Abram did not allow his failure there to keep him down. (Remember, success is getting up one more time than you fall down.) So he got up and headed back to Canaan, the place to which he was called.

Today you will see another trial of Abram's faith—a more personal trial—a trial from within his own family—and those are greater trials. As we examine this today, keep in mind that Abram's victory over trials was not based on Abram's ability to resist the temptation by his own reasoning and strength (Let me look at the pro's and cons and determine what is the wisest option.) No, Abram was able to overcome his trials because he had faith in Jesus Christ. He had to argue: How do I live to please the Lord who will purchase my salvation with his own blood? That is what the writer of Hebrews said!

Our headings are: Prosperity and problems, Proposal for Peace, and Preference for the Plains.

Our goals are: That knowing who you are in Christ and the riches of his grace, that you will learn to live at peace with all men, even being willing to give up worldly goods.

Prosperity and Problems

1 Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. 2 Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. 3 And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD. 5 Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. 6 Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. 7 And there was strife 冲突 between the herdsmen 牧人 of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.

1. Having left Egypt enriched by Pharaoh, Abram went north to the south of Canaan. God made the rich man richer and moved him back to the land to which God had called him. God gives wealth to those who don't have an abnormal attachment to it. He gives wealth 财富 to those for whom he has a special purpose for using their wealth. He gives wealth to those who can handle wealth without it making them arrogant 自大 and big-headed. It is true that he sometimes gives people wealth as a punishment...to let them use their wealth to destroy themselves. But that was not Abram's case.

2. We know that Abram's increase in wealth did not get to his head and make him arrogant. And Abram did not presumptuously 自以为是 act like his increase in wealth was God's approbation of his bad behavior in Egypt. How do we know this? Abram's return is distinctly marked with a return to worship of God to the altar he had made between Bethel and Ai. And he returned to faithful living. This may have been a physical return to Canaan, but it was also a spiritual return. He returned to looking to and trusting in God. Riches did not make him deaf...as it can do sometimes...make one deaf to the Gospel. Riches can become gold fetters 脚镣 that hold many as prisoners.

3. And you must notice a few things about the phrase "called on the name of the Lord."

- a. It was public worship...for the world to see.
- b. It was adoration 崇拜 for what God had done for him. It was confession of his sins. It was thanksgiving for God's mercy. It was supplication 恳求 for his and for the needs of others.
- c. It included his whole household.

While you don't directly see these things here, you do see them at other points of Abram's life.

4. Lot, on account of his relationship with Abram and with the Lord, also was blessed by the Lord. That

is not a surprise, of course, because there are many blessings for being around God's people. And those blessings can and do flow to those who are around you.

5. Because of the increasing wealth, mostly in the form of animals, the land was not able to provide enough food and water for the animals. The cup was overflowing and there was not room enough to receive God's blessings. This was a thorn on the rose.

Malachi 3:10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.

While "pouring out" is almost always used in the Scriptures to speak of God pouring out judgment on the wicked, here you can see the contrary...God pours out blessing on faithful living.

6. Interesting is that there is no mention of starvation 饥荒 anymore...Abram's pretext 借口 for going to Egypt in the first place...but abundant blessings.

Proposal for Peace by Abram

8 So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. 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."

1. The godly Abram, now back in a right relationship with God, and therefore not bound to things in this world, then made a proposal of peace to Lot. It was a generous proposal as far as Eastern people were concerned, and quite unimaginable. He wanted them to separate and offered Lot the choice of the best lands of Canaan.

2. Abram did not "pull rank" 弄权 and make the younger Lot do what Abram wanted. Abram was senior in age, position, and knowledge, but he did not try to guilt manipulate his younger nephew. He did not tell Lot that "before you decide which land you will choose, remember that everything you have is because of me." He was too much of a Christian to do that.

3. Abram's desire for peace with his covenant brother was stronger on his mind. (Abram did like what Paul did when he separated himself from John Mark: separate for peace.) He did not want "success to make a failure of their family." So Abram made no high demands. He could give in here because there was no morality issue at stake. It was more risky for the two covenant brothers to seem divided, for they would have been easier prey to the murderous Canaanites. And a fight between brothers would have been a bad testimony of God to the Canaanites. V7.

1Corinthians 6:7 Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? So learn to rather be cheated (and deal with the matter through the church) rather than expose Christ's name to mockery among non-believers. This was Paul's point.

4. In Abram's proposal he was not trying to be polite; he was not giving token words to appear noble and appear to be falsely humble. The fact is, Abram was not living by sight, but by faith in the promises of God. He looked forward to Jesus' day and rejoiced.

John 8:56 "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

He knew the greatness of what he had received and would receive-salvation through Jesus Christ-and the things of this world were growing dim to him.

Preference for Plains By Lot

10 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.

1. Lot, on the other hand, had not grown in faith, and still strongly held to the things of this world. The increase in wealth was a pull for him...a very strong pull. He was living by sight...and greedy for gain. Covetousness had filled his heart. He should have defaulted欠to his uncle, but the well-watered plains alongside the Jordan River and the possibility of greater riches had a far great pull, as it often does for unconsecrated不神圣的Christians. It did not matter if his lust欲望put his soul in limbo无着落, he wanted material prosperity. Lot chose the trains with newest tracks, but the tracks did not go all the way across the river. Sad. Another way to see this is Lot's desire for riches was like the grain that, at the beginning, grows up faster than the thorns, but thorns never stop growing. He had a short-sighted plan.

11 Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.

2. And so Lot chose the best for himself, not giving preferment优先to his spiritual father (who was also his physical provider) and he moved his people and flocks to the areas of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom and Gomorrah area reminded him of the accounts of Garden of Eden and the rich Nile Delta of Egypt. The land looked bright so he chose it. But "nature" is not a moral educator. At the least, Lot should have given preferment to his uncle. He didn't have to pray about this!

1John 2:16 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.

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.

3. With Lot taking the best lands, Abram stayed in the land of Canaan.

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content满足:

4. Lot certainly knew the wickedness of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is difficult for him not to have known about it. Either he looked at Sodom with rose-colored glasses, imagining that things were better than they were, or he was blinded by the thoughts of gold that he did not see the real danger that was ahead, or he thought he had the moral fortitude to not compromise with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is more likely he was blinded by the thoughts of gold.

Conclusion:

God raised Abram up to fight another battle even after he lost the battle in Egypt. That first battle after the knock down in Egypt was the pressure to covet wealth贪求财富. It was another important battle. But because Abram knew who he was in Christ he did not falter犹豫 when he was tempted引诱. He knew that the riches he possessed were stored up in heaven where moth and rust could not destroy them. So he offered whatever his nephew Lot wanted. And Lot chose the best. This must have saddened Abram...not because he lost the best land, but that his nephew's heart was poor. And yet, in God's providence意志, this was a way of clearing the land for Abram's descendants from whom Christ would come. Lot's family became the Ammonites and the Moabites, outsiders – even persecutors of God's people.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: 1. When you are knocked down by sin and you fail God, ask him to pick you up, clean you up, forgive you, and bring you back into a right relationship with him. 2. Learn not to let the things of this world take over your life. 3. But how can the things of this world become dimmer and dimmer to you? You begin to do this when you realize the riches of the grace you have in Jesus Christ and the hope you have for eternity. Nothing in this world can match that. If you don't focus on the blessings you have now and for eternity, you will never be able to part from shiny things of this world: money, pursuit of knowledge, love of fame, etc. The things of this world must become like candy to a grown-up.

Finally, if you want to be able to live your life to please the Lord and not be obsessed困扰with and overcome by wealth, you must begin with realizing all that Christ has done for those who believe in him and realize the heavenly hope you can have if you receive his work by faith. Then when you realize the greatness of your spiritual wealth, then, and only then, you will be able to live to please the Lord.