

GENESIS 13

ABRAM CHECKS HIS BAGS

Have you ever attempted to help someone only to have it blow up in your face? Did the person you were trying to help take offense by your actions? Of course you have, it has happened to all of us at some point. Now, turn that around for a second. Has someone attempted to help you, only you took offense to what they did? Of course you have, we all have at some point.

The problem is that no matter what your or their intentions, we can't always discern them. The truth is that we judge ourselves by our intent while we judge others by their actions. It is in our nature. We see the actions of others but we are not so good at seeing their heart. And that works in reverse also.

My point is that we have to remember this as we read through the life of Abram. Last week I told you that some people believe Abram sinned when he went to Egypt. Others believe he was just being pragmatic. We can't see into Abram's heart. God didn't rebuke him. However, Abram did get into a bind when he got to Egypt. Some say that Abram was sinning by taking Lot with him to Canaan. They believe he should have been left in Haran. That is probably true, but my point, once again is that we can't always tell what is going on in someone's heart. Maybe Abram was acting out of fear and doubt by going to Egypt during the famine. However, it was the standard practice of the day. That is not to say that we should do what everyone else does, but also tend to do what makes sense to us and not necessarily what others would have us do.

At the end of the day we see Abram doing what he believes to be right. He makes hard decisions that affect not only his family and those around him, but the future of a nation as well. Abram is a regular guy. Sometimes he gets it right and sometimes he doesn't. Either way, he is

doing his best to follow the LORD. I just want all of us to realize that before we send him to the gallows for some of his actions. The same can be said of Lot at times.

We have seen how God used Egyptian lemons to make lemonade after the "please say you're my sister" debacle. You remember that Pharaoh gave Abram lots of money and livestock for Sarai. Then God plagued Pharaoh to the extent that he forced Abram to leave. Abram and Lot left Egypt much richer than they were when they arrived.

Now we pick up where we left off as Abram and his extended family head back to Canaan. Now let's look at Genesis 13.

Gen 13:1 *Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South.*

Gen 13:2 *Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.*

Gen 13:3 *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,*

Gen 13:4 *to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD.*

Gen 13:5 *Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents.*

The directions we read here can be confusing if you are not familiar with a certain facet of the Bible. The Bible is Jerusalem-centric. That is, Jerusalem is always seen to be in the center of the world according to God. No matter which direction you come from, you are always going "up" to Jerusalem. As you can see, Abram went "up" from Egypt. They went "to the south." They didn't go south, they went to the south. That is they went to the south part of the Promised Land. (Negev)

Abram returned to his camp between Bethel and Ai. There he started his ranching business. Lot also got to work.

Abram called upon the name of the Lord. This is prayer. Abram thanked God for bringing him out of Egypt in one piece. Never mind what Pharaoh might have done to him and I'm sure Sarai was not too happy with him either.

Abram was now back where he began. To some, Egypt was a practical detour. To others, it was a hiccup that nearly cost him his wife and maybe even his life. At any rate, God intervened and Abram, as well as Lot are actually better off now than when they started. Abram has returned to the land he was promised.

We too can become sidetracked. At times it may seem like a legitimate detour. I have known God to allow us to detour at times. Though it isn't a detour to God, nothing we do takes Him by surprise. He has already foreseen it and adjusted for it. As I said last week, we can, at times freeze when we are not sure what to do. Some people are paralyzed but uncertainty. It has happened to most of us. However, our fear and paralysis only occurs when we have left God out of the equation. We can do this consciously or sub-consciously. People will see our actions and not truly know why we have done a certain thing, though they may think they do.

When someone gets lost in the woods, there are generally two things you can do. One is to stay put until you are found. The other is to backtrack until you return to your original spot.

We should be careful to acknowledge that God is the source of our provision. We aren't self-made businessmen or women.

Abram is now back on familiar ground. He knows the terrain. He has built altars in the region and to the ancient Semitic mind that represents the presence of God. Now that he is back on track, he gets back to the everyday business of supporting his family and taking care of his herds.

Abram can get back to his journey, his calling.

Gen 13:6 *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.*

Gen 13:7 *And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.*

Gen 13:8 *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.*

Abram and Lot were so successful that they as partners had outgrown the land they inhabited. Because of this each man's livestock was getting into the other's grazing land. This caused problems between Abram's employees and Lot's.

Once again, Lot doesn't have to be here. To some, Abram is still in sin because of Lot. However you see it, there is now a problem. Wow! They have almost become too successful for their own good.

Let's see how Abram approaches this problem.

Gen 13:9 *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."*

Gen 13:10 *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.*

Gen 13:11 *Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.*

Gen 13:12 *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.*

Gen 13:13 But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD.

Abram is going to take the high ground here and proposes a resolution to the problem.

Abram proposes that they separate. He gives Lot the choice of what land he wants. Abram did the Christian thing. He acted as a servant. He deferred to Lot, even though he knew he would probably come out on the short end of the stick; practically speaking.

We should always defer to others. Abram was being self-less. He knew that even though he may wind up with the inferior land that he was working for God. That meant God would take care of him. Oh, but some would say that Abram is sinning because he was giving away the land God gave him. Do you get the feeling that sometimes you just can't win? In the end, Abram did the right thing. This is called faith. When we walk in the Spirit and move in faith because we know we are on the same page with God, we can be fearless. Abram is back home and walking in faith.

Because he trusted in God, Abram did not have to be obsessed with his own rights and neither do we. The only *right* we truly have is the right to go to hell. Everything else is the free gift of God and has nothing to do with our concept of rights.

Lot's decision is more of a pragmatic one.

Lot looks at the land east of the Jordan and chooses it. It seems like a good decision. The plains are well irrigated and full of grass. This is prime grazing land. But Lot did something that many of us do. He made what others would see as a good business decision, a practical decision. It was just common sense to choose the better land. However he didn't take into account what we read in verse 13.

Lot would graze his livestock all along the East side of the Dead Sea. At the South end of this territory were 5 cities. Two of them were known as the Twin Cities of sin in that day. Vegas and the French Quarter had nothing on these two places.

Lot failed to take into account the effects of living in and around such places.

Verse 12 tells us that Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom.

1Co 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

Or you may have heard it this way: If you lie down with the dogs, you get up with fleas.

Lot wasn't necessarily a bad man, but he did have a weak constitution. He wasn't able to resist temptation, as was Abram.

2Pe 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

2Pe 2:8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)

2Pe 2:9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

If Lot had been wiser he would have taken into account the spiritual side of the equation.

For a Christian, decision-making is more than just what is practical or common sense. The Bible says we are peculiar. We make decisions based on God and His Word. A decision made in faith will many times seem crazy to the world. All the more reason to surround ourselves with

people that can understand and support us as we seek to complete what it is that God has put before us.

We read in 2 Peter that Lot was a just man: a righteous man. He wasn't just looking at the neon lights of Sodom and Gomorrah and thinking about partying. But we will see that the life of those cities had a negative affect on him and his family.

Gen 13:14 *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:*

Gen 13:15 *For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.*

Gen 13:16 *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.*

Gen 13:17 *Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.*

It is very important to note that the conversation in verses 14-17 doesn't take place until AFTER Lot leaves.

You may recall how Abram couldn't enter Canaan until his father Terah was dead. God did not reiterate His promises to Abram until after Lot left.

We have already talked about spiritual baggage. Terah was an idolater. He was a stumbling block to Abram. God told Abram to leave his homeland and go to Canaan. He never told him to take Lot or his father with him.

Peter told us that Lot was a just man. He wasn't evil. He just had a weaker constitution.

We find ourselves surrounded by people. Some are a help to us, while others are a hindrance. Some are obviously stumbling blocks, others, like Lot, are not so obvious. The point is that we have to separate ourselves from stumbling blocks whether they are people, things, situations or relationships.

We see here that even though Abram hadn't separated from Lot, God used this situation to separate them.

We have to ask ourselves where Lot got his faith. He was born into an idolatrous family. He was obviously ministered to by Abram. So even though Lot was a potential stumbling block Abram's life was still a witness to him.

I'm sure they missed each other after growing up together. This created a void in both their lives, but the separation had to take place.

We need to make the most of the time that we have with everyone, even if they are a stumbling block. We never know how long they will be around.

God told Abram to walk through the land that He had given him. God reiterated His promises to Abram. And guess what – even though Lot chose some of the land promised to Abram, God just told him that he would still hold the deed.

Gen 13:18 *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.*

Then Abram moved his tent to Hebron. This further separated him from Lot.

- a. **Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you:** As a token of Abram's reception of the land by

faith, God wants Abram to *explore* the land of promise, to walk through it as if it were his, though he did not have a record of ownership to the land yet.

2 Peter 1:3,4

3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

In the same way, God wants us to *explore* a land of promise, for us – His Word – where God has *given to us exceedingly great and precious promises* ([2 Peter 1:4](#)), where He has given us *all things that pertain to life and godliness* ([2 Peter 1:3](#)). He wants us to walk through this land, possessing it by faith.

b. Dwelt by the terbinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron: The name **Mamre** means, *vision*. **Hebron** means *communion*.

Abram once again walked in the Lord's vision for him and in communion with the Lord.

Application:

- Abram was a regular guy like all of us.
- He had to make decisions that weren't easy to make.
- He had to separate himself from Lot
- He didn't treat Lot like he had the plague, but he did separate from him for the good of his calling.

- As Christians we often have to do the same thing.
- We need to take the spiritual things into account when we make decisions and that won't always be what others think we ought to do.
- Abram was able to get through this because of his faith.
- He knew he was in God's will. Because of that he could be fearless.
- Walking humbly with God and living fearlessly in this world is a good place to be.