

Abram & Lot Separate

Genesis 13

Abram's life so far has been call and fall. He courageously leaves Haran for the Promised Land, but then allows his wife to be taken into the harem of the Egyptian Pharaoh to save his own skin (2:12, 15, 19). God corrects and blesses him anyway. Like all of us, he is mixture of faithfulness and sin. Because he was a man of faith, and God accepted him on that basis alone, God would never finish with him. Surprisingly to us, Lot is also a righteous man (2 Pet. 2:7). Though both are sons of God, they make radically different choices. Lot is blinded by his sight; Abram trusts the Lord despite what he sees.

The Sight of Faith Moses says Abram was very “heavy” coming out of Egypt with livestock, silver and gold (v2; cf. 12:10). He returns to his first altar at Bethel and worships, calling on and rededicating himself to the Lord (vv3-4). Abram is returning to the Lord, renewing covenant with Him, and as for anyone, it isn't easy—just imagine the conversation with Sarai. Lot has also grown rich, the land can't support them both so their herdsmen quarrel (vv5-7). How does Abram feel? He just got railed on by Pharaoh, the land he was promised can't support him, and now he'll have to separate from the only family he has there, even as hostile pagans surround him (v7). “Some calling!” he might say. Everything about the situation appears to be wrong, but he opens his hand anyway. He literally tells Lot “we are brothers” (v8). Brothers don't fight, and neither should their employees. Rather than buckle down and demand the best place as the older uncle, family patriarch, richer businessman, and called one of God, he says, “If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left” (v9). This gift, like all sacrificial generosity, demonstrates radical faith—God must provide (cf. Mk. 12:41-44). Abram grasped after safety and provision in Egypt, but now he trusts God to go before him.

The Blindness of Sight Lot, however, lifts up his eyes and sees the Jordan valley is watered like the Garden of Eden and Egypt (v10). He doesn't stop, think, ask, or pray, he just looks and chooses (v11; Gen. 13:6). It's obvious that this green land will support his livestock, it's a beautiful place to live, there's only one problem: it's east of the Promised Land. Was it a sin to live there? No, but that just goes to show all the ways you can do to wreck your life without technically breaking God's law. Lot was still a righteous man, but he chose to live there for unwise reasons and it cost him. The problem was not with the location of Sodom, but with what it meant to Lot—it was like the garden of the Lord. They were wicked sinners before the Lord (v13), and if Lot didn't know at the time, he would have found out and left if his heart was devoted to the Lord. We can take anything and turn it into an idol: “If I just had this house, this job, this spouse, this car, this family, this health, it would be like heaven.” The thing missing from Lot's heaven on earth was God Himself. If our vision of paradise has God at the center, then nothing can be lost. If it excludes God or marginalizes Him, the whole thing will crumble. When we examine our motives for what we buy, we find whom we're serving. When we look at what we daydream about, we find our greatest desires. Consider how you respond when God doesn't answer your prayers the way you wanted Him to. Consider your strongest emotions. If I'm angry about something, I must consider whether the thing I'm angry about is too important to me. If I'm fearful, is there something I find security in that I shouldn't? We don't want to be overly introspective either, but this is not Lot's problem. He is enraptured by what he sees, and therefore blinded to what Sodom really is—heading toward ruin.

The Panoramic Promises of God After Lot left, the Lord tells Abram not just to look north and south, but to the panorama of the Promised Land (vv14-15). Three times He mentions his seed or offspring (vv15-16). All this land will be theirs, and they will be many—like the dust of the earth (v16). God tells him to walk the land and see what will be given, and because he believes, he settles at Hebron and builds an altar to Yahweh (vv17-18). Jesus doesn't set the old covenant promises about land and offspring aside. He says “Blessed are meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). He rejected earthly kingdoms on Satan's terms, but as the greater Abraham gave up all His rights, died, and rose to inherit the greatest name, the entire earth, and all the nations (Phil. 2:4-11).

NOTES FOR LITTLE SAINTS

Today's Passage: Genesis 13:8-9, 14-16

8 Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left." . . . 14 The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, 15 for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. 16 I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted.

1. Abram was Lot's uncle, older, richer, more important, and called by God. What does Abram want to prevent in verse 8, and how does he do it (verse 9)?
2. Abram doesn't know where exactly he'll settle his family and livestock, but he trusts the Lord to provide and therefore can give generously to Lot. What can you give or share with your siblings or parents or friends that shows you trust God?
3. What does God tell Abram He will give him and do for him in verses 14-16?
4. Fill in the blank. Jesus said ,“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the _____.” –Matthew 5:5
5. Draw a picture of Abram at Bethel, on a mountaintop looking out over the beautiful land. You can draw his family and animals with him.

Memory Verse to Recite Next Week:

I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. —Genesis 13:16