

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“The Faith To Yield”

Genesis 13:1-18

2002

Introduction

Hanalei Bridge:

Drivers from both directions are requested to give right of way. It is a reasonable and gracious way of preventing a head-on collisions.

In Genesis 13, we find that Abram and Lot were on a collision course. How they each responded 1) serves as a warning to those who mistakenly think that getting ahead in life demands looking out for “Number One” and 2) It serves as a reminder that those who graciously yield in faith to God will be rewarded with His generous favor and blessing.

I The Travel Log Of Abram

A. Abram **went** up from Egypt to the Negev [Verse 1-2]

1. With his wife Sarai

2. With everything he had

a. He became very wealthy in livestock, silver and gold

1 Tim 6:17 “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”

3. With Lot

In Genesis 12:1, God had commanded Abram to leave his family in Ur and Haran, but in disobedience to this very clear command, Abram brought his nephew Lot along. Little did Abram know how costly this seemingly minor infraction of God’s command would be – both for himself and also for Lot.

B. Abram went from place to place until he came the Bethel [Verse 3-4]

1. Between Bethel and Ai

Bethel = “House of God”

Ai = `iy = “A ruin”

Gen 12:8a “From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east.”

Even though Abram comes back from Egypt with great riches, he ends up back where he started before going to Egypt. Essentially, Abram’s time in Egypt was all but *wasted* time. God could have and would have provided for his needs in Canaan.

2. There he **called** on the name of the Lord
 Gen 12:8b “There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.”

Application:

Jer 29:11-13 “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

II The Dilemma of God’s Blessing

A. Lot was traveling with Abraham [Verse 5]

Lot is a picture of some Christians who never seem to learn to walk alone with God, but always are leaning on someone else’s faith in God.

- They have a second hand faith
- They have a second hand prayer life
- They have a second hand intimacy with God
- They have second hand blessings

1. He also had flocks, herds and tents

Abram and Lot had both prospered in Egypt. But rather than strengthening their relationship, these blessings became a source of conflict.

B. The land could not **support** them both [Verse 6-7a]

1. Their herdsman began to **quarrel**

There was growing conflict between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. Each man’s herdsmen sought water and the best pasture for the animals of their master.

James 4:1-3 “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

C. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land [Verse 7b]

This brief commentary seems to suggest that the conflict between Abram and Lot was on full display before the unbelieving Canaanites and Perizzites.

Application:

Whether you realize it or not, unbelievers are watching your life: How you treat your spouse and kids, how you conduct yourself at work, on the road, when you’re under stress, when you think know one is watching. And what they see will either

draw them to Jesus Christ or repel them. And sadly, many people will never listen to what *any* believer *says* because of what *some* believers *are*.

1 Peter 2:12 “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

Phil 2:14-16 “Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life.”

III The Faith Of Abram

A. Abram suggested that there not be any quarreling: [Verse 8a]

Quarrel = Meriybah = “Provocation or strife”

Prov 15:18 “A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.”

Abram’s attention to the problem between Lot and himself speaks volumes about his growing faith and spiritual maturity.

1. Between Lot and himself

Matt 18:15-16 “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.”

2. Between Lot’s herdsmen and his herdsmen

Heb 12:14 “Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

B. Abram reminded Lot that they were brothers [Verse 8b]

Matt 5:5, 9 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth ...Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”

Application: As believers, we need to remember that we are members of one another and that as sons of God and those who are destined to inherit the earth, we are called to be peacemakers.

C. Abram pointed out that the whole land was before them [Verse 9a]

Abram makes it clear that there is more than enough room for both of them.

Application: Pastors and churches moving to the island.

One of Satan’s strategies is to get believers thinking that life is a “zero sum” game.

In other words, if God blesses you, then something has been taken from me.

Satan feeds this lie with a spirit of fear, insecurity, pride, and self-promotion.

D. Abram offered Lot first choice [Verse 9b]

Out of respect for age, Abram should have been automatically awarded first choice.

Instead, Abram did a magnificent, God-honoring thing; he gave up his own rights without hesitation and yielded to his nephew, Lot. He knew, by faith, that no matter what Lot chose, God would fulfill His covenant promises in his own life.

I like that! Abram didn't get ahead in life because he climbed the hill of success over the wreckage of men's lives who got in his way. No! It was God who exalted him because he placed the interests of others ahead of his own.

Illustration:

Christ was the embodiment of this kind of faith and became the ultimate example to us of a man who yielded and surrendered His rights.

Phil 2:3-11 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

IV The Selfishness Of Lot

A. Lot **looked** up and saw the whole plain of the Jordan [Verse 10]

Lot's decision was made on the basis of cool calculation. With the eye of an appraiser, he looked over the land, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the options.

Luke 16:15 "What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight."

1. It was well watered like the garden of the Lord

He saw the Jordan River; the lush green grass was growing, and the variety of palm trees. It made the whole place a veritable garden, and he was greatly attracted to it; it was a modern real estate developer's dream!

2. It was like the land of Egypt

Like Egypt, the cities of the plain were a place where Lot could add to his considerable wealth and status.

1 Tim 6:9-10 "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

- B. Lot **chose** for himself the whole plain of Jordan [Verse 11a]
 So we read, "Lot chose for himself." What a revealing statement!
 His primary concern wasn't the glory of God, or the benefit of his family or Abram's, or even his own spiritual welfare. His primary concern was, "What's in it for me!"

Prov 14:12 "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."

- C. Lot **lived** among the cities of the plain [Verse 11b-13]

1. He pitched his tents **near** Sodom

At first, Lot simply pitched his tent *near* Sodom. But in Genesis 14:12, we discover that he had traded in his tent for a townhouse *in* Sodom. Then in Genesis 19:1, we find that he was *sitting in the gate* as a leader of these wicked and godless people!

Application:

Scripture warns us repeatedly to beware of this slippery slope of compromise.

Ps 1:1-3 "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."

- a. The men there were wicked

1 Cor 15:33 "Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

- b. The men there were **sinning** greatly against the Lord

According to 2 Peter 2:7-9, "Lot's soul was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) ..."

But Lot would soon pay a much higher price for his sinful choice than simply personal distress and financial ruin. His sons-in-law and extended family members would soon be burned alive in Sodom. His wife would be turned to salt because of her attachment to Sodom (19:26). And his daughters would seduce Lot and caused him to commit incest, no doubt a reflection on the moral values they had learned in Sodom (19:30ff).

V The Lord Reaffirmed His Promises To Abram

It is interesting to note that God did not speak to Abram until after Abram had made his decision to finally obey God's initial command to separate from his father's household. Humanly speaking, the only thing which stood in the way of divine blessing was human disobedience. God eventually removed that barrier by forcibly separating Abram and Lot. At that point, God once again speaks to Abram and reaffirms His promises.

Application: I believe that many of us have missed tremendous blessings in life and the opportunity to be used of the Lord simply because we have refused to obey His Word. In most cases, we trade away the bounty of God for the scraps of the world.

A. Lift up your **eyes** [Verse 14a]

Lot had 'lifted up his eyes' (verse 10) and had seen the land before him with the eyes of one weighing financial promise. But Abram was commanded to look through the eyes of faith in God's promise.

Application:

Faith means we do not walk by what we see, but by what we know to be true in God:

2 Corinthians 5:7 " *we walk by faith, not by sight.*"

Abram was walking by faith. Lot was walking only by sight.

B. **Look** north, south, east and west [Verse 14b-16]

This promise of the land had been made to Abram years earlier when he lived in Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 12:1-3), and now God reaffirms this promise.

1. "I will give you all the land that you see"
2. "I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth"

This was quite a promise to make to a childless man in his 70's or 80's, but Abram was learning to walk by faith and not by sight.

Acts 7:2-5 "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. 'Leave your country and your people,' God said, 'and go to the land I will show you.' "So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living. He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child."

C. **Go**, walk through the length and breadth of it [Verse 17]

1. "I am giving it to you"

God wants Abram to explore the land of promise, to walk through it as if it were his. For now he was not to possess it, but simply to inspect it with the eye of faith.

Rom 4:20-22 "Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised."

"In the end, Lot who sought this world lost it, and Abram who was willing to give up anything for the honor of God found it." (Maclaren)

VI The Response Of Abram

A. Abram moved his tents and lived near the Hebron [Verse 18a]

B. Abram built an altar to the Lord [Verse 18b]

An altar is a place of worship, a place of sacrifice and a place of absolute surrender.

Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship.”

Conclusion:

In closing, there are several important applications I would like you to consider:

1. Whatever God tells you to do that is in keeping with His Word -- do it right away!
2. If you are in conflict with someone:
 - a. Address it quickly and biblically
 - b. Consider yielding your “rights” rather than have a head-on collision.
3. The world’s way of getting ahead is to look out for number one. But God’s way is to look up to Number One and to be a blessing to others. You don’t have to be worried about “losing” if others are blessed. So be generous! Help others succeed! God will see that kind of Christ-like faith and you will be rewarded!
4. Remember, people are watching you! You may be the only Bible they ever read.
5. No matter how enticing it might be, don’t camp near Sodom! In other words, be careful not to make subtle compromises – it could lead to eventual disaster.
6. Have faith in the sovereignty of God. He will be faithful to every one of His promises. In the meantime, look for every opportunity to humble yourself before God and others and God Himself will exalt you in due time!