

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #33

Genesis 13:1-18

The amazing George Mueller (1805-1898), when looking back over his own life, said - “The steps as well as the stops of a good man are ordered of the Lord.” King David wrote: “But know that the LORD hath set apart him who is godly for himself; the LORD will hear when I call unto him” (Psalm 4:3).

NO MATTER HOW NEGATIVE THE PEOPLE OR IMMEDIATE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE SOVEREIGN GOD WILL ALWAYS BLESS ONE WHO HAS BEEN SET ASIDE BY HIM AND FOR HIM.

PART #1 - The relocation and restoration of Abram. 13:1-4

We may recall that Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts for Sarai (12:16) and when he told Abram to leave his country with his wife, he let him take those gifts with him (12:20). So when Abram and his wife and Lot returned to the Negev, Abram was a very wealthy man (13:2). In spite of Abram’s sin and stupidity, God is sovereignly blessing him.

Verse 3 informs us that Abram left the Negev and went back to the Bethel and Ai area, the place where Abram first called on the name of the LORD (12:8). According to verse 4, he called on the LORD again, which means Abram was recommitting himself to doing God’s will. Had he done this in the first place, he could have avoided the entire Egyptian mess. At this worship service, Abram would have expressed great gratitude to God for His deliverance, protection and blessing.

PART #2 - The contention between Lot and Abram. 13:5-7

The chronology of these verses is significant, because just after Abram gets back into a right focus on God, he is confronted with a major problem. The problem is of course Lot. In II Peter 2:7, we learn that Lot was a righteous man, but by tracking him, you would never know it.

The problem between Lot and Abram was too many possessions and too little land. The word “strife” means that there was real contention of a legal nature. What we have here is the beginning of a “range war.” Apparently Abram’s shepherds were making some form of legal claim to the land. It is so amazing that the problem between these brethren was not poverty, but prosperity. **The sad reality is often physical prosperity brings spiritual bankruptcy.**

PART #3 - The solution offered by Abram. 13:8-9

The fact that verse 7 informs us of the existence of the Canaanites and Perizzites in the land suggests that the strife was known even by them. Abram’s solution was to offer Lot his pick of the land. He gave him first choice. Abram demonstrates great wisdom, just like Proverbs says a wise man lets off strife before it begins. Abram is not threatened by letting Lot choose first, because he knows God is carefully monitoring his life.

PART #4 - The decision of Lot. 13:10-11

Lot is a greedy, scheming individual who has ridden on the tail skirts of the success of Abram. Lot went after things that looked good. For Lot, this choice was, as Dr. Kent Hughes said, as easy as ‘falling off a log’ (p.201).

He does not ask God for wisdom, he is leaning on his own understanding. His decision is not based on any concern for Abram, but solely for profitability for self.

Lot chose his land and moved southeast for approximately 70 miles and then pitched his tent near Sodom, a wicked, godless place by God’s estimation (13:13). Lot saw this as a wonderful place to live and God saw it as evil. Carefully note Lot’s deterioration here: First he lives near Sodom (13:12); Second he lives in Sodom (14:12); Third he is a leader of Sodom (19:1). He ends up a worldly disaster who started by being near the evil and then he and his family are all in it.

By the way, the fertile area Lot chose, which was like the “garden of God” (v.10) when he chose it, is nothing more today than a dry, dusty, desolate area, which looks nothing like an area worth choosing. Be careful and prayerful when making choices because what initially looks beautiful and impressive may not end up being impressive.

PART #5 - The revelation of God. 13:14-17

Here is an amazing revelation of the sovereignty of God - Abram let Lot choose whatever land he wanted and God comes to Abram and informs him that someday all the land that he can visually see from the spot he was in will be his. Notice Lot lifted up his own eyes (13:10), but God directs Abram to lift up his eyes (13:14). God told Abram to walk (v.17) through the land because one day it would all be his. The loser was not Abram, it was Lot.

PART #6 - The relocation of Abram. 13:18

Abram moved to Hebron, which was about 30 miles south of Bethel and Ai. Even though he has had to move, at this point at least eight times (11:31; 12:1-4; 12:6-8; 12:10; 13:1; 13:3-4; 13:18), he still believes God and still worships God. No matter where Abram went, he worshipped God.

Abram had his share of problems, failures, setbacks. But he also had a heart that believed God, loved God and worshipped God. Because of this, God would bless Abram. God was closely involved with Abram’s life, his steps and his stops.

The study of Abram and Lot is a study of contrasts: Abram is other-oriented, Lot is self-oriented. Abram wants God’s will, Lot wants his will. Abram wants God’s prosperity, Lot wants worldly prosperity. Abram moves by faith, Lot moves by sight. Abram literally believes God’s word, Lot believes in himself. The real question for us is - Are we more like Abram or Lot?