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# GENESIS: IT ALL STARTS HERE

## *BEWARE: FREEDOM CAN LEAD TO RUIN*

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### **GENESIS 13:1-18**

13:1 So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb.

2 Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. 3 And he journeyed on from the Negeb as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the place where he had made an altar at the first. And there Abram called upon the name of the LORD. 5 And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, 6 so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together, 7 and there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land.

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." 10 And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) 11 So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other. 12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.

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. 17 Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you." 18 So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

## INTRODUCTION

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Abraham is known as the Father of the Faithful because he is a good example of trust and obedience. God promised and commanded, and Abram trusted and obeyed. Though Abram did not perfectly obey, his trust is exemplified again and again. Abram's nephew, Lot, on the other hand exemplifies a trust in himself and a love for this world. In Genesis 13 we are given a picture that acts much like a mirror, and we are wise to look intently upon what we see here. If we are to be sober-minded followers of Christ, we will do well to learn from mistakes and seek God's power to avoid them. In this message, we see how freedom can actually lead to ruin.

## MESSAGE OUTLINE:

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### **(1) THE CONTRAST BETWEEN ABRAM AND LOT**

### **(2) THE CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES OF LOT'S SUCCESS**

### **(3) THE BLESSING OF GOD WITH THE MAN WHO TRUSTS HIM**

### **(4) THE WARNING FOR US TODAY – BEWARE: FREEDOM CAN LEAD TO RUIN**

## EXPOSITION:

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### **(1) THE CONTRAST BETWEEN ABRAM AND LOT**

#### ◆ PROBLEM SOLVING VS. AVOIDANCE

- Abram speaks (Gen. 13:8). Abram is the first to provide a solution to the problem.

#### ◆ SELFLESSNESS VS. SELFISHNESS

- Abram offers Lot the choice of land, and he immediately chooses the best of the options (Gen. 13:19).

#### ◆ TRUST VS. SIGHT

- Lot “lifted up his eyes” (Gen. 13:10) and chose the land that seemed best, but Abram “lifted up his eyes” (Gen. 13:14) to see the land God had promised to him (Gen. 12:7).
  - Lot sees the fruitful valley and the lush terrain.
  - Abram sees nothing of note, but he hears the voice of God proclaim “Here, I will bless you!”

## ◆ SETTLING NEAR GOD VS. SETTLING FAR AWAY

- Genesis 13:12-13 – “**12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.**”
  - God called Abram out of Ur into Canaan (Gen. 12:1, 5-7).
    - Therefore, to be away from Abram and/or Canaan, from Lot’s perspective, was to be away from God’s blessing and back under the same condemnation as the rest of the pagan world.
  - So far in Genesis, “Cities” are not great places to be – Babel and Ur (Gen. 11).
  - Lot moved his tent “as far as Sodom,” and this is indicative of the breadth of his separation.

## (2) THE CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES OF LOT’S SUCCESS

### ◆ LOT’S SUCCESS

- Independent – Lot “chose for himself” and “separated” from Abram (v11).
- Successful – Lot had “flocks and herds and tents,” so much that “the land could not support” Lot and his uncle together (v5-6).
- Visionary and Entrepreneurial – Lot saw that the Jordan Valley, near Sodom, was like “Egypt” and like the “garden of the Lord” itself (v10).
- Savvy and Shrewd – Lot moved his tent near Sodom, which was a well populated city where he could do business with these men (v12-13).
  - Moody – “No doubt [Lot] was very ambitious; he probably wanted to become richer... He wanted to excel Abraham in worldly goods, to become rich faster. So he saw and determined upon the well-watered plains of Sodom... He determined himself and pitched his tent toward Sodom. I don’t know how long he lived on these well-watered plains, but no doubt the men of those days said of him when he had settled down: *‘There is a shrewd man; he’s a smart man. Why, I can predict that in a very short time he will be a wealthier man than his uncle Abraham. Look at these well-watered plains; why, he is a great deal better off than Abraham now.’* ...How long he remained on these plains I don’t know, but the next thing we know is that he got into

Sodom. We are told that Sodom was very wicked. He lived near it, and he went into it with his eyes open, and he knew all about it.”<sup>1</sup>

- Nearness to the World
  - Rather than nearness to God’s blessing, Lot chose nearness to the world
  - Lot was self-trusting, and not God-trusting
- Love for the World
  - The view from Lot’s eyes was one of worldly success and pleasure
  - Lot forgot that God was at work in the world to bring about redemption through an offspring... Lot was more interested in what he could gain from this world
- Compromise with the World.
  - Lot was fully linked with the worldliness of Sodom.
    - First, Lot was near Sodom (13:12), then he was in Sodom (19:1), and then he was a known man among the Sodomites (19:6).
      - Lot’s wife was a Sodomite, and Lot was preparing to marry off his daughters to Sodomite husbands (Gen. 19:14).
      - Lot called the Sodomites “brothers” (Gen. 19:6).
    - While Peter speaks of Lot as a “righteous” man (2 Peter 2:7-8), we may understand this in one of two ways:
      - One, Lot was inferred as righteous from Abraham’s prayer (Gen. 18:22-23) and determined by Lot’s deliverance from Sodom by the hand of God’s angels (Gen. 19:16-17).
      - Two, Lot was “righteous” only in comparison to the men of Sodom, since these men were said to have been “wicked” and “great sinners” (Gen. 13:13).

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<sup>1</sup>Moody, D. L. (1877). *New Sermons, Addresses, and Prayers* (pp. 438–439). Cincinnati, OH: Henry S. Goodspeed & Co.

#### ◆ LOT'S CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES

- Though Lot thought he was leaping from success to greater success, he was sorely mistaken.
  - Calvin – “Lot fancied he was dwelling in paradise, but he was nearly plunged into the depths of hell.”
- Lot was Captured by Conquering Kings
  - Lot and all he possessed was seized by foreign kings who conquered Sodom, Lot’s new home (Genesis 14:8-12).
- Lot’s family is lost in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
  - In a tragic story of epic proportions, Lot had become so entrenched in Sodom that his family would not hear him even when God warned him of impending judgment. Lot’s cries of warning went unheeded, for (from his children’s perspective) he had seemingly never cared to speak or act on the Word of Abram’s God before (Genesis 19:12-16).
    - When Lot left Sodom, he only had his wife and two daughters, but his wife longed too much for the worldly pleasures of Sodom, and she also was lost (Gen. 19:26).
    - Lot’s daughters were only temporarily saved, however. They proved to be worldly women as well (Gen. 19:31-32), and their offspring became peoples who were enemies of God (Gen. 19:36-38).

### (3) THE BLESSING OF GOD WITH THE MAN WHO TRUSTS HIM

#### ◆ GOD REITERATED HIS INTENTION TO BLESS ABRAM WITH LAND

- Genesis 13:14-15 – “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.’**”

#### ◆ GOD REITERATED HIS INTENTION TO BLESS ABRAM WITH OFFSPRING

- Genesis 13:16 – God said, “**I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth...**”

◆ ABRAM WORSHIPS GOD IN THE PAGAN LAND BECAUSE HE TRUSTS GOD

- Abram “built an altar” to God, and this act of worship, in a land that is desolate and utterly godless, is evidence that he believes and trusts in the promise and power of God (Gen. 13:18).

**(4) THE WARNING FOR US TODAY – BEWARE: FREEDOM CAN LEAD TO RUIN**

◆ LOVE FOR THIS WORLD AND ITS STUFF WILL ENJOIN YOU TO ITS PAINS

- When the false security, elusive success, and pretend safety of this world is in danger or gone, your sense of stability will go reeling along with it.

◆ EYES UPON THIS WORLD WILL BE BLIND TO THE JOY OF THE WORLD TO COME

- If you are looking for your best life now, then there is nothing in eternity that will lift your gaze.
  - You may wander about in this world with your face downturned and your eyes searching for treasures amongst the trash.

◆ LOT WAS CALLED RIGHTEOUS, BUT HIS LINEAGE IS GOD’S ENEMY

- If we are to understand that Peter’s reference to Lot as a “righteous” man means that he enjoyed the blessing of God rather than the curse, we do not have to guess at the future of his wife, his children, or his grandchildren.
  - So too, YOU may be a Christian who fancies himself or herself a consumer of this world’s pleasures, but you do so to the detriment of your testimony to those you love.

## MY PRAYERS

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- May God forgive us for loving the things of this world so much.
- May God forgive us for trusting in ourselves so much.
- May God transform us and make us to love and trust Him.
- May God powerfully work in us and in our loved ones to bring about trust and obedience.

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