

FAITH IN CONFLICT

Genesis 13:1-13

INTRODUCTION

We just had Thanksgiving. We came together with families, prepared food, and gathered for dinners. Now I know, of course, that this is a time of perfect peace and harmony among families. I know there are never any disagreements ... never any stress ... never any strife leading into Thanksgiving or Christmas or the meals surrounding them ☺ However, we know that on this side of glory, even as believers, there is tension and strife.

God paints the heroes of the faith with warts and all. They are not glossed over. Abraham and other heroes of the faith we see in the Bible are not photo-shopped or auto-tuned.

Abraham is not the hope of Israel, Jacob is not the hope, David is not the hope. Charles Spurgeon is not our hope, R.C Sproul is not our hope, John MacArthur is not our hope.

Our hope is Jesus Christ. All men fall short.

Man's failure will not stand in the way of God's promise.

READ: Gen 13: 1-13

Proposition: Two Lessons

- I. Restoration of Service**
- II. Resolution of Strife**

First lesson.....

- I. Restoration of Service** **13:1-4**

Point –Return to the Land in Repentance

Proof – “¹So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him; and Lot with him.”

Key component of Genesis 13 is land:

- vv.1-4 - return of Abram to the land
- vv. 5-13 - strife in and over the land
- vv. 14-18 - renewed promise from God of the land

“²Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold.”

- silver and gold was unique for a nomadic lifestyle
- his wealth is increasing - God has been blessing him
- Abram also added ill-gotten gains through his deception

“³And he went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai,”

- Abram is retracing his steps
- recap of his journeys: Ur Shechem -> Bethel/Ai (12:7-8) -> Egypt -> Negev -> Bethel
- pointing towards not just the location of the party but more importantly, the location of Abram’s heart
- when he was in Egypt, he was walking according to the flesh rather than the spirit
- now he is returning

“⁴to the place of the altar, which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.”

Notice, no altars were mentioned *in Egypt*.

There was no “calling on name of the LORD” *in Egypt*.

Abram is returning back to the **altar** he left behind.

I believe it is absolutely right to understand there is a confession as an essential part of “calling on the name of the LORD.”

- for Abram here and in general
- the original Greek word (*homologeō*) translated as confession means “say the same thing” (as God).

Confession is the key to restoration.

I also believe that part of his public proclamation, part of his confession, would have been acknowledging his sin to those who were with him in Egypt - including Lot and Sarai, and the servants and others in the extended family.

Application - Private sin requires private confession between the sinner and God. Public sin requires public confession at the same level as the offense. If you sin against one person, you confess to that one person. If you sin before the church, your confession is before the church.

So Abram went from working faith, witnessing faith and down to wavering in his faith back to worshipping in his faith.

Illustration – Why do we have tests in school? So that the teacher knows how you are doing. It also encourages us to study. But it also helps us learn from mistakes. Believers, in the same way, God will have tests before you for His glory and for our good. None of us bats a thousand (1.000). We will fail. When we have the right heart, we learn from that (Rom 8:28).

→ Abram isn't just a restored man. He is a stronger man.

After this renewal and strengthening on the part of Abram, we encounter another problem, another threat. This threat, again, is not from the enemies of God surrounding Abram, whether in Egypt or in the Promised Land of Canaan.

The threat is still from within, rather than from without.

In Egypt, the threat was Abram himself.
This time the threat is from within the family of God.

In Egypt, God protected Abram from himself.
Back in the Promised Land, God now protects Abram from within
the family ... within the body.

Second lesson.....

II. Resolution of Strife 13: 5-13

Point – Strife - some kind of dispute - in this case it is spreading
out and impacting the witness of God

The nature of strife is given in Prov 17:14 – *“The beginning of
strife is like letting out water”* – similar to a tiny hole in a dam
releasing only a small trickle of water that gets bigger and bigger.
The nature of contention is to move from “trickles to torrents!”

Three things can be said of a trickle that becomes a torrent:

1. It lets out more water than is possible to predict.
2. It lets out more water than is possible to control.
3. It lets out more water than is ever possible to retrieve.

What we see here is the reaction to this strife by two believers -
Abram and Lot:

- selfishness vs. sacrifice
- walking by sight vs. walking by faith
- love of self vs. denial of self

What then, should we do when a quarrel arises? The second half
of Prov 17:14 gives a terse answer, *“So abandon the quarrel
before it breaks out.”*

There are three catalysts to strife:

- A. Proximity
- B. Prosperity
- C. Pride

A. Proximity

Proof – Gen 13:5-6a – “Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together;

God calls us to be part of a local church so we are called to be in proximity. That proximity is an inescapable catalyst to conflict. This is one we can't do anything about and shouldn't do anything about other than to be aware of this catalyst.

Illustration - There are no solo flights to heaven. It is all formation flying as we are bound together in Christ.

B. Prosperity

Proof – Gen 13:6b-7 – “for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together. ⁷And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land.”

Lot is also wealthy, very likely because of his association with Abram.

The problem here is that while Abram possessed the flocks, apparently, the flocks possessed Lot.

You might say, if there had not been the prosperity, there would not have been an issue. I don't think so.

If it hadn't been this, it would have been something else because strife comes from the heart.

C. Pride

Without pride, there will be no conflict among believers.
There will be disagreements. There is diversity.
But ungodly conflict/strife comes from the root of pride.

Proof – James 4:1-2a: “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.”

It is always about power and pride.

v. 7 – “**Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were ...**”

Moses’ side note to the original audience - two reminders:

1) **Wage the right war**

Pick your **enemies** wisely and pick your **battles** wisely.

Gal 5:14-15 – “the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another.”

Illustration – I wouldn’t go witnessing on the Mormon Temple grounds with another brother, enter the door and then get in a fight. We would scoff at that - it is nonsense.

Strife among believers needs to be kept private, not taken into the public sector - not because there wouldn’t be justice gained but because of what it would do to your witness – 1 Cor 6

2) Watch your Witness

Remember Abram being rebuked by a pagan - Gen 12

- sins - not trusting God, cowardice, deception
- now it is strife among believers/family

Bad testimony to the unbelievers

- Rom 2:24 - "For my name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you"

Solution to the Strife:

1. Sacrifice
2. Separation

1. Sacrifice: vv. 8-9

Point – Abraham puts the other before himself

Proof – Gen 13:8-9 – “Then Abram said to Lot, ‘Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. ⁹Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me: if *to* the left, then I will go to the right; or if *to* the right, then I will go to the left.’”

There is tremendous **humility** and **generosity** on the part of Abram. It would have been reasonable for Abram to appeal to his position as patriarch but he didn't do so.

Abram recognized – “**we are brothers**” – in contrast to the Canaanite and the Perizzite.

- not just biological connection
- more importantly, there is a larger, spiritual dimension as well

Rom 12:18 – “if possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” - especially believers

This is a different **Abram** than the **Abram** in Egypt.

- could be result of altar and worship in v. 4.

The best solution to strife is the **sacrifice** of:

- rights
- privilege
- liberties
- opinions
- interests

It is not about me or you, it is about serving God and His church.

2. Separation - vv. 10-13

Proof – “¹⁰ **And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere-- *this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah-- like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar.***”

Lot – father of the Moabites and Ammonites - Deut 2:9, 19 –

“sons of Lot”

- Abram’s nephew Lot may well have been older than Abram
- Abram was not the firstborn (chronologically) – 11:26, 32; 12:4

“**well-watered everywhere**” – probable lingering effects of the Ice Age after the Flood

Zoar – fertile Delta area

Eve was tantalized by the sight of the fruit – 3:6; 6:2. God even

“**like the garden of the LORD**”

“¹¹So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. ¹²Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom. ¹³Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD.”

Lot didn't know the destruction coming in his land of choice. Statement made in reference to Lot. He is listening to the cries from Vanity Fair. Lot is a man, here, who is walking by sight.

Calvin – *“seeing that he was led away solely by the pleasantness of the prospect, he pays the penalty of his foolish(ness). Let us then learn by this example, that our eyes are not to be trusted; but that we must rather be on our guard lest we be ensnared by them, and be encircled, unawares, with many evils; just as Lot, when he fancied that he was dwelling in paradise, was nearly plunged into the depths of hell.”*

Application – Do you want to choose your lot in life? Or do you want God to choose your lot in life?

How???

- Obey the revealed will of God. Delight yourself in the Word of God. Serve. Sacrifice. Worship.
- Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing your toil is not in vain!

There is an escalation with Lot:

- First, Lot looked with a gaze towards Sodom.
- Then, he pitched his tent near Sodom.
- Then we will find him living in Sodom in chapter 18. He was compromising all the way.

Was Lot a believer?

2 Pet 2:7-8 – “He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men ⁸(for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day with *their* lawless deeds)”

—> Yes, Lot was a believer.

Illustration – I heard a story about a rich couple lightly pursuing God, while feverishly pursuing the things of the world. They chose the most expensive private schools for their children and then sent their children off to prestigious and godless universities without the proper spiritual anchors. As to be expected, the children have turned their back on God and the faith.

When a mature, godly woman heard them bemoaning this, she wisely said: “Not to be surprised when you pitch your tents near Sodom.”

Application – Don’t pitch your tent near Sodom.

Your college. Your work. Your leisure. Count the cost.

Guard yourself. Don’t push the boundaries.

A brief look at **Abram**:

12:1 be separate: think **differently**, eat ..., dress..., talk..., sow, shave, and swear ..., do business, give refuge, give witness, administer justice, hire and employ, war, worship ...

Walk by sight or **walk by faith** - **Abram was walking by faith**

Selfish vs. Unselfish - Abram was unselfish

Seen vs. Unseen (2 Cor 4:18) - Abram was looking at the unseen

Self-gratification vs. self-denial - Abram was denying self

Recognizing that the **eye** is the **gate** to the heart and mind – Gen 3:6 (Eve); Josh 7:21 (Achan); 1 John 2:16

Contrary to Lot, Abram was looking for The City of God – Augustine, Heb 11:10

Illustration – Christ of the Andes is a monument high in the Andes at 3,832 meters (12,572 ft) above mean sea level on the border between Argentina and Chile. It was unveiled on 13 March 1904 as a celebration of the peaceful resolution of the border dispute between the two countries. Years ago, a large statue of Christ was erected high in the Andes on the border between Argentina and Chile. Called "Christ of the Andes," the statue symbolizes a pledge between the two countries that as long as the statue stands, there will be peace between Chile and Argentina. Shortly after the statue was erected, the Chileans began to protest that they had been slighted -- the statue had its back turned to Chile. Just when tempers were at their highest in Chile, a Chilean newspaperman saved the day. In an editorial that not only satisfied the people but made them laugh, he simply said, "The people of Argentina need more watching over than the Chileans.

Separation is sometimes necessary.

CONCLUSION