

RENEWED PROMISE

Genesis 13:14-18

INTRODUCTION

The eye is the gateway to the soul.

One author described it this way: “The object on which we fix our eyes is that on which our heart is set; the things we like best, or the person we love most. How many times you have stood gazing at some picture because you so much admired it! All unconsciously when in company with someone, you were found looking intently at them, simply because of a great fondness you had for that person.”

READ Gen 13:14-18

Proposition: Two elements in this passage:

- I. Eyes of Faith
- II. Feet of Faith

So That: Both are pointing back to God.

I. Eyes of Faith Gen 13:14-15

Point – Heb 11:1-2 – “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For by it the men of old gained approval.”

Proof – Gen 13:14a – “**And the LORD said to Abram**”

There is a sudden change in direction of the narrative.

- God speaks to Abram for the first time directly in Ch. 13.
- This is the third time God has spoken to Abram – previously in Gen 12: 1-3 and 12:7.

We, at times, will fail. But while we fail at times, God's word never fails. That is the stage here. There is strife and conflict, but now God speaks to Abram with words of hope.

Point: Two aspects:

A. Land

B. Seed

A. Land

Point – **Return** to the Land (vv. 1-4), **Strife in ...** (vv. 5-13), **Promise of Land** (vv. 14-18).

Proof – “^{14b}**after Lot had separated from him**”

Abram is now alone as God's Providence intended.

Isa 51:2 – “Look to Abraham your father, And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; When he was one I called him, Then I blessed him and multiplied him.” (Ezek 33:24; Mal 2:15)

The departure of Lot is the departure of the last of Abram's relatives. He left his extended family in Ur. His father died in Haran.

→ The place of strife has morphed into the land of promise and blessing.

So, we recognize that separation is sometimes necessary.

Proof – “^{14c}**Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward** ¹⁵**for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.**”

Contrast between Abram and other(s):

What man tries to do by himself -

- to make a name for himself (Babel)
- to use his sight to choose for himself (Lot)

In both cases, what man attempts in futility to do, God does for Abraham.

This is the contrast of walking by faith rather than walking by sight.

Point – It is better that God gives, than someone takes.

With Man - It is better to give than to receive.

With God - It is better to receive than to take.

Prov 27:2 – “Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.”

The first word God says to Abram is “**Now**” - a short Hebrew word, נָא (*na*)

- translated as “please” in vv. 8 and 9 when Abram is speaking to Lot
- occurs many times in the Old Testament - 60 times in Genesis alone

But only 4 times does God use this word to address a human:

- **13:14** (land)
- **15:5** (descendants)
- **22:2** (sacrifice of Isaac)
- **Exod 11:2** (instructing Moses and the nation of Israel to ask former Egyptian masters for parting gifts)

Every time - it is a time of testing, a time of trust.

It is a time for God's people to exercise tremendous faith!
Abraham had to demonstrate tremendous faith.
The land is a huge part of this faith.

B. Seed

Proof – Gen 13:16 – “And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered.”

descendants – literally “seed” is the same word as in 3:15; 4:25; 9:9; 12:7; 15:5, 18; etc.

“as the dust of the earth” - literally “dust of the land”

- same Hebrew word – #r,a' (*erets*)

“seed” – [r;z'' (*zara*)

4:25 – “offspring” – birth of Seth

9:9 – covenant with Noah and his “descendants”

12:7 – Land promise to Abram and his “descendants”

13:15, 16 (3 times) – “descendants” same as dust of the earth (in number)

15:5 – “descendants” as the stars (in number)

There is a spiritual component here and a physical component as well. So, when you read through the rest of the Pentateuch and God lays out all His blessings of obedience and His curses of disobedience, they are literal. There is a literal land promise and a literal seed promise. Without replacing the physical promise, there is a spiritual promise as well.

As the dust swarms over the earth, so shall you swarm over the land and all the earth.

Spiritual harvest ... not at the expense of the physical seed of
Abram -> Israel

Same terminology as in 28:14 – Jacob’s Ladder – “Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

The land is in the hands of the Canaanites and Sarai is barren.

“**Now**” – short Hebrew word, **עַתָּה** (*na*)

Gen 15:5 – “And He took him outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’

And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’”

Time of testing ... Time of trust - Time to exercise faith!

Illustration – In the 19th century, there was a tightrope walker, who did incredible aerial feats. All over Paris, he would do tightrope acts at tremendously scary heights. Then he had succeeding acts: he would do it blindfolded, then he would go across the tightrope, blindfolded, pushing a wheelbarrow. An American promoter read about this in the papers and wrote a letter to the tightrope walker, saying, “Tightrope, I don’t believe you can do it, but I’m willing to make you an offer. For a very substantial sum of money, besides all your transportation fees, I would like to challenge you to do your act over Niagara Falls.” Now, Tightrope wrote back, “Sir, although I’ve never been to America and seen the Falls, I’d love to come.” Well, after a lot of promotion and setting the whole thing up, many people came to see the event. Tightrope was to start on the Canadian side and come to the American side. Drums roll, and he comes across the rope which is suspended over

the treacherous part of the falls -- blindfolded!! And he makes it across easily. The crowds go wild, and he comes to the promoter and says, "Well, Mr. Promoter, now do you believe I can do it?" "Well of course I do. I mean, I just saw you do it." "No," said Tightrope, "do you really believe I can do it?" "Well of course I do, you just did it." "No, no, no," said Tightrope, "do you believe I can do it?" "Yes," said Mr. Promoter, "I believe you can do it." "Good," said Tightrope, "then you get in the wheel barrow."

In the same way, there are three necessary ingredients of biblical faith, of saving faith.

<i>notitia</i>	(Intellectual)	- notification, knowledge
<i>assensus</i>	(Emotional)	- assent, agreement
<i>fiducia</i>	(Volitional)	- trust

This is the kind of faith Abram demonstrates. That is what God demands of you and your trials in life - to not just hear the Good News, but to TRUST the Good News.

Application – Lift up your eyes to:

1) God, the Father – John 17:1; Matt 7:7-8; James 4:2

Ruben Torrey –*The Power Of Prayer* – “We do not live in a praying age. We live in an age with hustle and bustle; of man’s efforts and man’s determination; of man’s confidence in himself and in his own power to achieve things. An age of human organization and human machinery and human push, and human scheming, and human achievement, which in the things of God means no real achievement at all. What we need is not so much some new organization, some new wheel, but the spirit of the living creature in the wheels we already possess.”

2) Jesus – Heb 12:1-2 – “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every

encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

3) **The Heavens – Isa 40:26-28;**

4) **The Harvest – John 4:35** – “Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.”

II. Feet of Faith

Gen 13:17-18

Point – Walks by faith rather than walking by sight.

Faith is put into action.

Throughout Scripture, the hands and feet are symbolic of one’s life.

Proof – **Gen 13:17-18** – “**Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.**” ¹⁸**Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.”**

“**walk about the land**” – symbolic of taking possession

To the **original audience**, your father Abraham has already walked the land, it is yours!

Josh 1:3 – “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.”

“moved his tent” – also **“on his journeys”** (v. 3) – literally means “breaking camp” – periodic stops typical of nomadic travel, give flocks and herds time to rest and not be overdriven

Remember his journeys: Ur -> Shechem -> Bethel/Ai -> Egypt -> Negev -> Bethel (12:7-8) -> Mamre

- North to **“oaks of Mamre”** - named after the Amorite Mamre who helped Abram defeat Chedorlaomer in 14:13.

“moved his tent ... and there he built an altar” – another permanent memorial to God - remember 12:8

Altars had been built in Shechem (12:7), Bethel (12:8; 13:4), and now Mamre/Hebron (13:18).

Application– We, at times, will fail. God’s word never fails. We return to him and worship.

The promise is renewed and we are rejuvenated.

CONCLUSION

This chapter begins and ends with the faith of Abram working upwards as he calls on YHWH in formal public worship at the altar AND in the middle of this *inclusio* is the faith of Abram working outward as he walks by faith rather than walking by sight.

2 background truths - rooted in God and about God:
Unilateral promise from the Immutable God

“I will give it to you” (15,17)

God’s sole role in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant

Illustration – same as promise to Noah (“I will never again ...”)

- No qualifiers.

- No caveats.
- No conditional statements – “If you ..., Then I will ...”

“forever” (15) – עולם (*olam*) – 9:12, 16; 13:15; 17:7-8, 13, 19

Immutability of the Promise

Point – Doctrine of **Immutability**

- God is **unchangeable** in his essence, attributes, consciousness, and will.
- James 1:17b – “with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.”

→ why you need to be a pretribulational, premillennial

Point – there is never any dimming of the light of God’s holiness

From our perspective, the sun, moon, and stars move, disappear, change in shape, or vary in intensity—their benefit to us comes and goes. But with God there is no variation or shifting.

His goodness of character knows **no change**

- unending
- unceasing
- unchanging

Micah 7:18-20 – “Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. ¹⁹He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. ²⁰You will give truth to Jacob and unchanging love to Abraham, which You did swear to our forefathers from the days of old.”

Application – Promise of God – **Mal 3:6** – “I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.”