

Walking in Abraham's footsteps. Part 4.

Genesis 13:5-18.

And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might live together. For their substance was great, so that they could not live together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle. And the Canaanite and the Perizzite lived then in the land. And Abram said to Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray you, between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are men, brothers. Is not the whole land before you? I pray you, separate yourself from me. If you go to the left, then I will go to the right. Or if you go to the right, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the circuit of Jordan, that it was all well watered (before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah,) like the garden of Jehovah, like the land of Egypt as you come to Zoar. And Lot chose all the circuit of Jordan for himself. And Lot journeyed east; and they separated themselves from one another. Abram lived in the land of Canaan, and Lot lived in the cities of the circuit and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before Jehovah, exceedingly so. And after Lot was separated from him, Jehovah said to Abram, Lift up your eyes now

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and look from the place where you are northward and southward, and eastward and westward. For all the land which you see I will give to you, and to your seed forever. And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can count the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be counted. Rise up and walk through the land, in the length of it and in the breadth of it, for I will give it to you. And Abram moved his tent and came and lived in the oaks of Mamre, which is in Hebron. And he built an altar to Jehovah there.

The two major players in this incident are Abraham and Lot.

Strife breaks out between the herdsmen of Lot and Abraham. As a consequence of this strife, we get a real insight into the character of these two men.

We see the worldliness of Lot and the deep faith of Abraham.

The strife didn't produce the worldliness in Lot any more than it produced the faith of Abraham.

It only manifested what was already in their hearts.

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Lot, although he had made the journey from Ur with Abraham, is quite unlike his uncle in crucial areas.

There is a dimension of spirituality present. He is not entirely without a spiritual orientation, but it is overridden and dominated by other concerns.

Verse 5

“He had flocks and herds and tents.”

I think that this order is quite significant.

When the Bible speaks of Abraham, it always references his, “Tent and his altar.”

He had flocks and herds too, but these are rarely mentioned. When they are it is an almost, “Oh by the way,” comment.

Lot's description begins with “flocks and herds,” and then adds, “Oh, by the way, tents as well”

Lot was not the ‘pilgrim in heart’ that Abraham was.

He was very interested in what this world had to offer him in terms of material assets.

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It's interesting that there is not one reference to Lot building an altar. His faith is overshadowed by other concerns and priorities.

When he was given a choice by Abraham with regard the land he would like to have, look carefully at what impacts his choice.

Verses 10-12.

And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the circuit of Jordan, that it *was* all well watered (before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah,) like the garden of Jehovah, like the land of Egypt as you come to Zoar. And Lot chose all the circuit of Jordan for himself. And Lot journeyed east; and they separated themselves from one another. Abram lived in the land of Canaan, and Lot lived in the cities of the circuit and pitched *his* tent toward Sodom.

“Lot choose for himself,” is a telling phrase.

It's in such marked contrast to Abraham, who was willing to allow God to oversee the choosing.

{Compare this with the Psalmist,

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Psalm 47:4

“He shall choose our inheritance for us ...”

If we allow God to do the choosing of our inheritance as Abraham and the Psalmist did then our testimony will be as Psalmist declared

Psalm 16:5-6

“LORD. You have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.”

Lot exhibits a grasping spirit. He has to secure his own future possibilities.

He can't rely on God to do that for him.

There's no record of him seeking God; no indication of the largeness of spirit that we see in Abraham.

Abraham says, “You choose Lot.”

Lot should have responded. “No, it's not my place or right to choose. You are the oldest; you are the senior

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member of this party. It was to you that God promised this land, not me. I'm here simply because of your kindness."

Rather, he **"lifts up his eyes,"** {**verse 10**}

His eyes were the binoculars of his heart.

William Blake wrote,

"This life's dim windows of the soul,

Distort the heavens from pole to pole,

And lead you to believe a lie,

When you see with, and not through the eye."

Lot looked with his eyes, and not through his eyes.

He didn't look through his eyes from an inner sense of values and convictions.

He looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah. It reminded him of Egypt. He hadn't got Egypt out of his system.

- He looked and saw the land's profitability, but not its corruption.

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- He saw the outward beauty of the land, but failed to see that it was marked for soon-coming judgment.

He made some tragically misguided choices.

Verse 12

He chose the well watered plains but entered into dryness of soul.

He '**pitched his tent towards Sodom,**' in contrast to Abraham pitched his tent towards Bethel and turned his back on worldly Ai.

Genesis 12:8.

And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Ai on the east: and there he built an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

The geography given here is more than just coincidence. It is intended to be spiritually significant.

'Bethel' means, "The house of God."

Ai means, "The heap of ruins."

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It doesn't take a rocket scientist to work out that to be facing one of these means of course that he had to turn his back on the other.

Which one he chose to face was more than geographical coincidence; it was an indication of his spiritual condition.

To face Bethel was to value and to focus on Godly ways and purposes.

To face Ai was to value this world's ways and purposes, which in the final analysis will amount to no more than a 'heap of ruins.'

The next reference to Lot's dwelling place is in **Genesis 19: 1**

"Lot dwelt in the gate of Sodom."

He had gone up in the world. He was a successful and significant man. He's powerful and influential.

He's a VIP.

Abraham is such a contrast to his nephew Lot. His concerns are so, "other-than" Lot's.

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Lot's major concerns and priorities related to "My advancement, my future, and my resources."

Abraham's concerns were 'Kingdom concerns.'

Verses 7-8

The strife that arose between his herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen didn't evoke from Abraham the kind of approach that you might expect from the senior partner in the operation.

"Back off small fry!"

He didn't exercise his rights and call for submission from this junior family member.

His major concern was that the strife didn't escalate.

Proverbs 17: 14

"Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out."

The potential outcome of the conflict among their herdsmen was that it could escalate very quickly and spill over onto Lot and Abraham themselves.

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Abraham wanted to avoid this, not just because he didn't like conflict, a "peace-at-any-price," kind of person.

He wasn't like that at all.

He was prepared to go to war when the occasion demanded it – as it does in the next chapter.

The key phrase that motivates him is found in **verse 7-8**.
"The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time."

"We are brethren."

"What we are doing is being observed. We cannot have strife without injuring one another as brethren, and without injuring the testimony of our Father."

One of the great hindrances to people accepting the testimony of Christ is that His followers spend inordinate amounts of their time in conflict with one another.

We have, over the years, fought to the death over the most inane and minute issues.

- What Bibles we should read.

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- If we should sing, what hymn books we should sing from.
- How much water we should use in baptizing our converts.
- What style of music God likes.

It's pathetic!

All the while, 'the inhabitants of the land look on.'

Why on earth would they want to join our small-minded crusades and our pathetic battles?

King David was another who shared Abraham's Kingdom concern over the testimony of God's people before those watching on.

King Saul had been slain in battle. He was David's sworn enemy. It was time to gloat. "I've come out on top!" David wasn't concerned with who had won. He was more worried about what God's enemies would make of all this 'warring' within the camp of Israel.

2 Samuel 1:20

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“Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.”

Abraham moved quickly to ensure that strife didn't develop. So must we.

If you become aware of a point of strife, if a problem arises between you and a brother or sister, then move directly to reduce it to zero.

Seek to gently stop it instead of multiplying it and letting it escalate.

Take care of it immediately. Others may tell you, “Oh- let it go, it will work itself out.”

That sounds easiest, but silence, time and separation are not the friends of reconciliation.

Don't let emotions harden and calcify. Don't let disputes deepen and fester.

Abraham refused to let interpersonal tensions make him small. Abraham went to Lot in humility of heart and said,

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in effect, "I feel things haven't been right between us. What can I do to help? We're brothers. Let's make our relationship good and strong again."

In doing this and without even knowing it, Abraham was spiritually equipping himself for what lay ahead in his relationship with Lot.

In the next chapter Abraham becomes God's instrument for rescuing a brother who had been taken away at sword point and carried away. {He would never have qualified for this task of deliverance unless he had first learnt how to deal with personal squabbles and petty conflicts.}

In **Genesis 19** the Lord summons Abraham to pray and intercede on Lot's behalf before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Through the agency of Abraham's prayers Lot is carried, almost bodily out of the city by angels.

Abraham's potential as a deliverer hung in the balance in this situation of tension between he and Lot.

He resolved it.

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He refused to allow it to make him small and bitter.

He stayed open to the Lord and open to his brethren and this openness allowed for the full flow of God's delivering potential through him.

The final point of contrast between Abraham and Lot that I would like to draw your attention to is –

While Lot was selfish and grasping, Abraham learned and exhibited the beauty of a yielded spirit.

Lot "chose for himself."

Abraham, who actually had the 'right of way by virtue of seniority, refused to exert this right. He wasn't arrogant or self assertive. He exhibited a meek and humble spirit.

Matthew 5:5

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Let me ask you the question, "Who inherited the land? Was it the grasping man or the yielded one?"

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It was Abraham's right, but he didn't exert his rights. This sounds to me very much like a New Testament passage –

Philippians 2:6

“Who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.”

NASB “He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.”

He was entitled to His equality with God to be recognized.

It was His by Divine right, by Divine nature. He refused to grasp at it.

Lot was more like Lucifer in his grasping attempt to take something that wasn't his by right. Both Lucifer and Lot lost the very thing they grasped at. Jesus and Abraham were both given the thing they were willing to forfeit through being yielded.

Ecclesiastes. 10:4

“Yielding pacifies great offences.”

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We are called to walk in the Spirit of Christ and in the footsteps of Abraham.