

ABRAM'S REPENTANCE AND RETURN TO GOD AND THE PROMISED LAND

GENESIS 13:01–04

Introduction

Abram had just begun the great pilgrimage of faith. Beginning faith had just been stirred within his heart. He had started out on the great journey of following after God and His promises. But now, Abram is to have an entirely different experience, a tragic experience, that of *weak faith*.

Weak faith always gets us into trouble. In fact, God tells us that weak faith is the reason we suffer and face so much trouble in the world. Abram faced a terrifying need — no food — and his faith weakened and eventually crumbled. Instead of turning to God and trusting Him to help, Abram turned to the world, depending solely upon his efforts. He forsook the promised land and went to Egypt, only to be thrown out from there. He repented and returned to God and to the promised land.

I. *Genesis 13:01–02 Abram Left Egypt: Separation from the World*

Repentance: Every believer who is weak in faith and wanders off needs to repent and return to God. By repenting and returning to God, the believer will, over a period of time, become strong in faith. God always receives the repentant believer and blesses him richly, ever so richly. God always forgives sin, no matter how terrible the sin has been, if the person repents — truly repents — and turns to the LORD and begins to follow Him.

This is exactly what happened to Abram. Note that Abram returned to God and the promised land. He could have returned to Ur of the Chaldees or to Haran or even to some other country and land. Unquestionably, he and Sarah were discouraged and downcast, feeling deep guilt, shame and embarrassment. They were probably gripped by dread, apprehension and even some fear, hating to face the members of their household and the labourers of their herds. But Abram and Sarah did exactly what was needed.

They separated from Egypt, from the world of ungodliness and worldly lusts (v. 1).

II. *Genesis 13:03–04 Journey back to God and the Promised Land*

They repented and began their journey back to the promised land, to Bethel. Apparently, Pharaoh feared the God of Abram so much that he let Abram keep the gifts he had given for Sarah, hoping to pacify Abram's God (v. 2). Note that Abram was very rich in livestock, silver and gold.

Bethel was the place where Abram had begun his journey in the promised land and had built an altar for worship (vv. 3-4). All this points to Abram's repenting and turning back

to God. In fact, Scripture clearly says that “Abram called on the name of the Lord.” And when repentant believers call on the Lord — sincerely call — the Lord restores them, even to a more glorious position of blessing and service than before.

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

Acts 8:22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.

2 Chr 7:14 If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Isa 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Isa 66:2 “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.”

Hosea 6:1 “Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.

Psa 34:18 The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. ■

ABRAM SEPARATED FROM LOT: SELFISH FAITH VS. UNSELFISH FAITH GENESIS 13:05–13

Introduction

Abram treated Lot like a son. Lot was Abram's nephew. When Lot's father, Haran, died, Abram took Lot in and reared him just as he would his own son. But as we shall see, Lot paid little attention to spiritual matters. This is what this passage is all about. The passage draws a sharp contrast between Lot and Abram, between a carnal, worldly believer and a spiritual believer. It gives us a picture of unselfish faith vs. selfish faith.

=> Abram lived by faith; Lot lived by sight (Gen 13:8-9; 13:10-11).

=> Abram was giving and unselfish; Lot was greedy and selfish (Gen 13:8-9; 13:10-11).

=> Abram was humble and respectful; Lot was prideful and self-exalting (Gen 13:8-9; 13:10-11).

=> Abram sought after God and His promises; Lot sought after the bright lights, possessions and pleasures of this world (Gen 13:14-18; 13:10-11).

=> Abram was spiritually minded; Lot was worldly minded (Gen 13:8, 12; 13:10-12).

=> Abram looked for the heavenly city that is eternal, whose builder and maker is God; Lot looked for a worldly city that was built by man and offered the wealth, position and bright lights of the world (Heb 11:10, 13-16; Gen 13:12-13).

=> Abram became the father of all who believe (Rom 4:11); Lot became the father of only two daughters who brought utter disgrace to his name (Gen 19:33-38).

=> Abram was made "heir of the world" (Rom 4:13); Lot lost all his possessions in the fiery destruction of Sodom living the latter years of his life in a cave (Gen 19:30).
(Arthur W. Pink. *Gleanings in Genesis*, Vol. 1. p. 148.)

The characters of Abram and Lot stand diametrically opposed to each other. Abram was a man of faith; Lot was a man of the world. A close examination of their lives will help the believer in the growth of his own faith. This passage is an eye-opener into faith: it is a passage...

- that should stir us to seek God and His promises with more diligence than ever, just as Abram did.
- that should frighten us to flee the world — its bright lights, pleasures and possessions — the very thing that Lot failed to do.

The subject is this: Abram Separated from Lot: Selfish Faith Vi. Unselfish Faith

I. Abram and Lot faced a threefold problem (vv. 5-7).

II. Abram sought to solve the conflict (vv. 8-9).

- III. Lot was misled by the lust of the eyes and by what looked good: by appearance (vv. 10-11).
- IV. Abram lived where he could prosper spiritually; Lot where he could prosper in the world (vv.12-13).

I. Genesis 13:05–07 Abram and Lot Face a Threefold Problem

Abram and Lot faced a threefold problem. Remember: Lot was the son of Abram's brother, Haran. When Haran died, Abram took Lot into his household. Thus, when Abram left Ur of the Chaldees for the promised land, Lot went with him (see Gen 11:31). We know from Scripture that Lot himself, at some point, became a believer and began to follow after God and His promises. But Lot lived a carnal life, an extremely carnal and worldly life (2 Pet 2:7-8; see note, Gen 19; 1-38). The first sight of his carnality and love for the world shows itself in this passage. Obviously, Lot had become a wealthy young man through the years while he was with his uncle, Abram. Most likely, Abram, who was childless, had treated Lot as a son, educating him and giving him his start in business and ranching. The threefold problem that arose between Abram and Lot was due to the wealth possessed by both.

1. Problem one: they were unwisely staying together even when the land could not support them both (v. 6). Abram and Lot were intelligent men, so they were bound to be aware of the problem: there just was not enough pasture land to keep both herds together and feed them. But for some reason, they did not want to separate. No doubt, keeping the two families and labourers together made them much more secure against bandits and marauders. In addition, there was a strong bond between Abram and Lot. From all indications, Abram loved Lot like a son (see Gen 13:8-9; 14:13-16). However, the situation was now critical: there just was not enough good pasture to handle the large herds and flocks of the two ranchers. No matter how much they wanted to stay together, no matter how close their relationship, they needed to separate. Abram in particular recognized this. He was the one who was to suggest separating; this will be seen in just a moment.
2. Problem two: a conflict between the workers of the two men was being waged over the best pasture land and water holes. Note that the conflict was not between Abram and Lot; it was only between their labourers. The two men had not yet been drawn into the conflict; their relationship had not yet been affected. But Abram was wise enough to know that petty arguments and conflicts eventually affect everyone unless they are squelched in the beginning.
3. Problem three: Abram and Lot were about to become a poor testimony to the world (v. 7). Note that the Canaanites and Perizzites were living in the same area. This means they were watching the conflict between the workers of Abram and Lot, probably wondering how the two large sheiks (ranchers) would solve the problem. It was just a

poor testimony for men of the true God to allow a situation to exist that would cause severe conflict. Remember: one of the very purposes for God choosing Abram was for Abram to bear witness to the other nations, witness that there is only one living and true God, only one Saviour and hope for man. Thus Abram knew that he faced a unique opportunity to bear witness to the surrounding neighbours. How he handled the situation would give either a strong witness or a weak witness for God.

GENESIS 13: 07 PERIZZITES

The Perizzites were some of the original people to settle in Palestine (Gen 13:7; Exo 3:7).

=> They are often mentioned in relation to the Canaanites (Gen 13:7; 34:30).

=> They were one of the nations to be eliminated by Israel (Gen 15:20; Exo 3:8, 17; 23:23; 33:2; 34:11; Deu 20:17; Jos 3:10; 24:11; Jud 1:4). □

GENESIS 10: 15–20 CANAANITES

The Canaanites are the descendants of Canaan, the fourth son of Ham. They settled in the land of Canaan, that was later to become known as Palestine. Note four significant facts about the Canaanites.

1. First, the Canaanites were an ungodly and unrighteous people, an utterly immoral and unjust society. The two well-known cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were Canaanite cities. Note what Scripture says about these ancient people:

=> God had to judge Sodom by raining fire down upon the city because of its corruption.

Gen 19:5, 15 They called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them”... With the coming of dawn, the the angels urged Lot saying, “Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here or you will be swept away when the city is punished.”

Lev 18:1-3, 6-10, 23-30 The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them, ‘I am the LORD your God. You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices.... “No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD. Do not dishonour your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her. Do not have sexual relations with your father’s wife; that would dishonour your father. Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father’s daughter or your mother’s daughter, whether she is born in the same home or elsewhere. Do not have sexual relations with your son’s daughter or your

daughter's daughter; that would dishonour you...Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion. Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the foreigners residing among you must not do any of these detestable things, for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you. Everyone who does any of these detestable things — such persons must be cut off from their people. Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God.”

- b. Second, the future of the Canaanites had been foretold in the prophecy by Noah. They were to be a conquered and enslaved people (see note, Gen 9:24-27).
- c. Third, the Canaanites were the people who occupied Palestine or the land of Canaan when Israel set out from Egyptian slavery to conquer the land. They were primarily conquered by Israel under Joshua (see Jos 9:22-27; see 9:1-21) and Solomon (1 Kng 9:20-21).
- d. Fourth, the land of Canaan was to become “The Land of Promise” or “The Promised Land” to the Jews.

Gen 12:7 *The LORD appeared to Abram, and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.*

Gen 15:18 *On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.”*

Gen 17:8 *“The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”*

Gen 50:24 *Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on an oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”*

- 1) The descendants of Canaan. Keep in mind that Canaan himself was the youngest son of Ham, and that Ham was the son of Noah. Noah was the godly grandfather of Canaan. But Canaan apparently paid little attention to his grandfather's godly

testimony. From all indications, he ignored or forsook God just as his father, Ham, had done. (See Gen 9:20-23.)

The descendants of Canaan were these:

- a) *Sidon*: this area was to become a great commercial city that sat on the Mediterranean Sea just north of Canaan. It was a Phoenecian city. Later on in history it was to be eclipsed by the city of Tyre, which was to be founded just twenty miles south of Sidon (1 Kng 5:6; 1 Chr 22:4; Eze 27:8).

Isa 23:2, 4 Be silent you people of the island and you merchants of Sidon, whom the seafarers have enriched...Be ashamed, Sidon, and you fortress of the sea, for the sea has spoken: "I have neither been in labour nor given birth; I have neither reared sons nor brought up daughters."

- b) *Heth*: the ancestor of the Hittite people. They originally appear in Asia Minor and eventually built a great empire that ruled throughout western Asia. They ruled most of Canaan during Abraham's time.

Gen 23:3-4 Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spake to the Hitites. He said, "I am a foreigner and stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead."

- c) *Jebusite*: the people who settled the area of Jerusalem. They were the citizens of Jerusalem when David conquered the city.

2 Sam 5:6-7 The king [David] and his men marched to Jerusalem to attack the Jebusites, who lived there. The Jebusites said to David, "You will not get in here; even the blind and the lame can ward you off." They thought, "David cannot get in here." Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion – which is the city of David.

- d) *Amorite*: the people who settled mostly in the Judean mountains of Palestine. However, they became so numerous and spread so far over the land that the Canaanites were sometimes called the Amorites. They first appeared during the time of Abraham.

Gen 15:18-21 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates – the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."

Note that Joshua defeated the Amorites.

Jos 10:5-7 Then the five kings of the Amorites – the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon – joined forces. They moved up with all their troops

and took up positions against Gibeon and attacked it. The Gibeonites sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: “Do not abandon your servants. Come to us quickly and save us! Help us, because all the Amorite kings from the hill country have joined forces against us.” So Joshua marched up from Gilgal with his entire army, including all the best fighting men.

- e) *Girgashite*: the actual location of these people is unknown. They too are in the list of nations whose territory was promised to Abraham (Gen 15:18-21). Joshua fought against these people.

Jos 24:11 *“Then you crossed the Jordan, and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands.”*

- f) *Hivite*: the name means “villagers” or “settlers in cities”. They lived in Shechem (Gen 34:2), Gibeon (Jos 9:7) and at Mount Hermon (Jos 11:3).
- g) *Arkite and Sinite*: these people were Phoenecians who settled to the north of Tripolis, just below Lebanon (1 Chr 1:15-16).
- h) *Arvadite*: the Phoenecian settlers of the island city Arvad, which sits right off the coast above Palestine or Canaan. It is only about 100 miles north of Beirut (Eze 27:8, 11).
- i) *Zemarite*: probably the settlers of Simyra or Tsumra in the same vicinity as the other Phoenician cities above.
- j) *Hamathite*: these people settled the northernmost territory of Palestine or Canaan. They were the founders of the Hamath, a large city that sat on the Orantes River (Num 13:21; 34:8; 1 Kng 8:65).
- 2) The territory of Canaan is clearly spelled out (v. 18b-20). They spread out...
- from Sidon in the north.
 - to Gerer in the south,
 - over to the southern area of the Dead Sea where four cities were located: Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboim. The territory of the Canaanites even went beyond these cities over to Lasha, which is an unknown city that apparently sat somewhere along the coast of the Dead Sea. □

II. Genesis 13:08–09 Abram Solves the Conflict

Abram sought to solve the conflict between Lot and himself. This he did by doing two things.

1. First, Abram suggested the need for keeping peace between them and their workers. They were brothers and brothers should not fight; brothers should care for each other and look after each other. Abram knew that all kinds of trials and enemies were going

to confront them as they followed God and sought the promised land. They were going to need one another; thus they needed to be at peace and ready to help when help was needed. The trials and enemies of life are just too great for brothers not to stand together against whatever confronts them. Abram knew this; thus he stepped forward to suggest peace before the conflict erupted into a crisis.

2. Second, Abram offered to give the best pasture land to Lot, offered to sacrifice his right to claim the best for himself (v. 9). Abram had the right to choose first, and he deserved that right.

=> He was the older, the head of the family

=> He was the person to whom God had promised the land

=> He was the leader, the one who had led the pilgrims to the promised land

But Abram did an astounding thing: he offered the first choice of land to Lot. Abram gave up his claim to choose first. By this he illustrates perfectly what it means...

- to act unselfishly
- to give sacrificially
- to be humble and meek

Note four significant facts.

- a. Abram's great concern was the relationship between Lot and himself. Settling the strife was so urgent he was willing to go to any length.

Rom 12:18 *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

Phil 2:3-4 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Heb 12:14 *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

James 3:14-18 *“But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.” Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*

- b. Abram was soft and caring toward Lot, very soft and caring. Jay P. Green, in his translation of the Hebrew, expresses it well (note that Abram uses the word *please* twice):

And Abram said to Lot, Please let there be no strife between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we (are) men, brothers. Is not all the land before you? Please separate from me; if to the left, then I will go the right; or if to the right, then I will go the left. (The Interlinear Bible, Vol. 1. Translated by Jay P. Green, Sr. Grand Rapids. MI: Baker Book House, p. 29.)

- c. Abram had great wisdom. He knew this fact: if he chose the best land for himself and forced Lot to go elsewhere, Lot would most likely react with bitterness against Abram forever. But if he gave Lot first choice, Lot could have no reason for sharp feelings. In fact, there was a chance that Lot might be touched by such unselfishness and become more attached to Abram and perhaps to God.
- d. Abram had great faith in God. He had learned this lesson in the famine experience when he failed to trust God's provision and went down into Egypt for help (Gen 13:10f). Abram had learned that God would take care of him, that God expected the true believer to trust Him. Thus, Abram was now willing to seek God and His righteousness above all else, willing to trust God to take care of him even if Lot acted selfishly and usurped Abram's rights and chose the best pasture land for himself.

Mat 6:33 *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

Psa 31:19 *How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.*

Psa 37:3 *Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.*

Psa 118:8 *It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.*

Prov 3:5 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.*

Thought 1. Abram's sacrifice is a picture of the sacrifice of Christ.

- 1) Both had the right to the promised land, yet both sacrificed their rights to accomplish their purposes. Christ had the right to remain in the perfect land of heaven, yet He gave up His right and came to earth to die for man. Abram had the right to live in the most perfect area of the promised land.

2 Cor 8:9 *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

John 10:17-18 *"The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life — only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."*

2) Both sought peace above all else:

Col 1:20 And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Eph 2:13-14 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

3) Both humbled themselves and acted unselfishly, giving and sacrificing to the ultimate degree.

Phil 2:5-11 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!

4) Both trusted God to take care of their needs, to provide for them no matter what happened.

Mat 26:39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

Mat 26:53 “Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?”

III. *Genesis 13:10–11 Lot’s Selfishness and Greed*

Lot was misled by the lust of the eyes, by what looked good. This was the beginning of Lot’s fall. The decision he now made altered his life forever. Lot became a tragic illustration of selfishness, greed, carnality and worldliness. Remember, Abram had just offered Lot the first pick of the land for his ranch. Note what Lot did:

1. Selfishly, Lot “lifted up his eyes” to look for the best region of the land. Lot jumped at the chance to get the best region. The idea is that he *immediately* lifted up his eyes and began to survey the land to see where the most watered and fertile region was. This should not have been the first thing he did, but it was. Lot was selfish and greedy. How can we say this? Because he should have “lifted up his eyes” to Abram, the man of God and the head of the family, and insisted that he choose first. But Lot did not do this; in fact, there is no record that he even thanked or showed appreciation to Abram for the privilege of choosing first. Lot simply “lifted up his eyes” and immediately began to survey the land, looking for the very best land to claim. Lot was filled with selfishness and greed, wanting the very best for himself despite the fact that the right to choose first belonged to Abram.

Thought 1. What a selfish act! Keep in mind that Abram had taken Lot in and treated him like a son when Lot's father died. Abram reared Lot, educated him and got him started in business. Most likely, Lot owed everything to Abram. Yet here Lot was usurping the right of Abram by failing to acknowledge Abram's position and contribution to his life.

How like so many people today, even children. Too many of us are selfish. We want the best for ourselves even if we have to neglect our parents and those who have helped us so much in life. Too many of us are unthankful and show little appreciation to those who have made us what we are.

1 Pet 5:5-7 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

1 Pet 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

1 Pet 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

2. Selfishly, Lot focused his eyes upon what appeared to be the best land. The best land seemed to be the land that surrounded the Jordan River or basin. The description of the land is striking:

=> It was well watered.

=> It was like the garden of the LORD, that is, Eden. This means it was fruitful and lush, bearing all kinds of vegetation and growth.

=> It was like the land of Egypt. Remember, Lot had been to Egypt with Abram and seen how fruitful the land around the Nile River was. Note that Lot was comparing the land to Eden and Egypt, the very best that the world had to offer. His mind was focused upon the world and the things the world could give him, its position, possessions, pleasures, honour and wealth.

=> It was the land that had given rise to the infamous, ungodly cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Note that the cities still existed; God had not yet destroyed them. Lot, no doubt, knew of their ungodliness; yet he was still considering the Jordan Valley.

Thought 1. Lot ignored the ungodly behaviour of Sodom and Gomorrah. In blindness, he must have denied that their ungodliness would influence the spiritual life of his dear family.

3. Selfishly, Lot chose all the best land for himself. He chose the whole plain of the Jordan River.

- => He selfishly chose the whole region, refusing to offer Abram at least part of the fertile plain of Jordan.
- => He foolishly chose the region where ungodliness flourished.
- => He selfishly chose material wealth over the safety of his family's salvation and spiritual growth.

Thought 1. Note two striking lessons.

- 1) People move for all kinds of reasons: seeking a better position, job, scenery, more money, a larger house and on and on the reasons could go. When believers move, they must always look at the spiritual impact of the move:
 - => the number of fellow believers within an area
 - => the availability of Bible centred churches that really preach Christ
 - => the moral and spiritual atmosphere of the community, schools, businesses and institutions of the area the worldly places that exist to tempt the children
- 2) We must never be misled by appearance, by the lust of the eyes and by what looks good. There is far more to life than the physical and material, far more than the bright lights, pleasures, possessions, positions and wealth of this world. The things of this world do not satisfy the human soul: they leave the soul empty, dissatisfied and unfulfilled. The only thing that satisfies the human soul is God and the things of God, things such as purpose, meaning and significance; things such as love, joy, peace, goodness, faith, discipline and control. The fulness of life comes only from God and from God alone; therefore, the major decisions of life must be made in light of God. What kind of decisions?
 - where to live
 - where to work
 - where to go to school
 - where to go for recreation
 - where to worship
 - who to marry
 - who to fellowship with
 - who to date
 - what movies and TV programs to watch
 - what to wear and how to dress

Every decision we make in life should be made by considering God, by considering the impact it will have on our spiritual growth and testimony for Him. Lot failed to do this; we must not.

GENESIS 13:10 ZOAR

The city of Zoar was one of the oldest cities on earth, founded by the Canaanites. The city...

- was saved from being destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah because of Lot's prayers (Gen 19:20-22).
- was ruled by a king and conquered in a great war fought during Abraham's time (Gen 14:1f).
- was mentioned by Isaiah and Jeremiah (Isa 15:5; Jer 48:34). □

IV. *Genesis 13:12–13 The Choices Made by Abram and Lot*

Abram lived where he could prosper spiritually; Lot lived where he could — prosper within the world, where he could secure the world's possessions and enjoy its bright lights and pleasures. Abram continued his pilgrimage of faith: he refused to settle down, moving all around the land of Canaan. There were probably at least three reasons why Abram refused to settle down.

- => His herds and flocks were large, so he would have to constantly move about in search of new pasture.
- => The Canaanites had settled in the land and built cities long before Abram arrived. The Canaanites were the original settlers of the land. It would have been dangerous for Abram to settle down or stay in one place too long. The local citizens would have felt threatened by his permanent presence.
- => Abram did not want the wickedness of the Canaanites to influence his family and workers. God had called him to live a life of faith and separation from the worldliness of the earth. God had called him to set an example of godliness before the world.

Abram knew what any thinking and honest person knows: fellowship with the wicked of this earth contaminates a person. He and his people lived in the world, but they were not to be a part of the world. Abram was not going to settle down and live in the midst of the ungodly, live where they could influence and lead his household away from God and into sin. But this was not true with Lot. Lot made two tragic decisions.

1. Lot moved where he could prosper within the world and enjoy its pleasures and possessions. Where did Lot settle? In the "cities" (plural). Lot, just as Abram, had to move all about in search of new pasture when his large herds used up a particular pasture. But note where Lot moved his herds: always close to the *cities* of the Jordan plain, right in the midst of the ungodly of the earth, right where the sins of the world were bound to influence him and his dear family.

But this was not all: Lot decided to settle down, and the place he chose for a home site was the worst place of all, near Sodom. What would make Lot do this? Money, greed, business — wanting the pleasures and possessions of the earth. The cities were just what they are today: places where the biggest markets for business transactions are.

- => The cities had all kinds of markets for gold, silver, sheep, goats, camels, cattle and other commodities. Lot, just as any businessman, needed these markets to keep his business flourishing and growing.
- => The cities had all kinds of pleasures and possessions. Lot and his family desired the bright lights, pleasures, and possessions of the world. (Evidence of this is Lot's wife: she just could not break away from Sodom and its pleasures, even at the risk of losing her life [Gen 19:15-26]).
- => The cities also offered the opportunity for worldly position, honour and recognition. Lot would later seek position and honour from the world. This is indicated by the fact that Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom when judgment was about to fall upon Sodom. Sitting at the gate of a city was reserved only for city officials. The city gate was where city officials met to conduct the business of the city. At some point in time, Lot became a city official of Sodom (Gen 19:1).

Now, what was wrong with Lot doing business within the cities of the land? Nothing. Abram, no doubt, transacted business within the cities of Canaan as well. He had to, for it was the only way he had to grow and increase his business holdings, and Scripture is clear: Abram had large holdings; he was very rich in gold, silver and herds (Gen 13:2). The wrong committed by Lot was this: he became part of the world. He not only lived in the world, he participated in its worldly pleasures and sins, its greed and wickedness. Lot moved right in with the worldly and ungodly of this earth.

2. Lot moved to Sodom, to a place where the people were *wicked and very sinful* (v. 13). And note: their wickedness and sinfulness were “before the Lord.” They sinned openly and in full view of God. This means they did not try to hide their sin; they had no shame over their sin. They probably did what many do today: declare that their behaviour is not wrong; it is not sin. It is only a *personal preference*, a *private choice* and a person's *individual right* to do as he wishes.

Later on, we will see a terrifying fact: there was not a godly or righteous person in Sodom, not a single person. Yet, Lot moved to Sodom, to the outskirts of the city. He moved there because he wanted what the city offered: its business opportunities, bright lights, pleasures, possessions and position. Lot turned away from God and His promises, turned away in order to seek the world, its possessions and pleasures.

Thought 1. Scripture is clear about separation from worldliness, from the pleasures and possessions of the world.

Acts 2:40 *With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”*

Mat 16:26 *“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

Luke 21:34 *“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.”*

Rom 12:2 *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

2 Cor 6:17-18 *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,” says the Lord Almighty.*

Eph 5:11 *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.*

Col 3:2 *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

2 Tim 2:4 *No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer.*

Titus 2:12-13 *It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

James 4:4 *You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

1 John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.*

Isa 52:11 *Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the articles of the LORD’s house. ■*