

Genesis 13:14-18 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, <sup>15</sup> for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.” <sup>18</sup> 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.

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## Genesis 13:1-18 | Lift Up Your Eyes

The writer of Hebrews begins his list of the heroes of faith with this definition.

Hebrews 11:1-2 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. <sup>2</sup> For by it the people of old received their commendation.

Christianity is a religion of faith. That means we are trusting in those things which we cannot see, and this is the very nature of trusting in promises. When we are trusting in the promises of God we are trusting in the character of God himself. The issue is to the fallen human mind this is not an intuitive process.

You see the baseline of all reality is the word of God. There is nothing more solid in all of existence than the word of God. Mountains will pass away, but the word of God will stand forever. But instead of depending on the word of God for our understanding of existence, we tend to absorb our understanding through our own experiences and pressures. This causes us to miss the key factors that are at play in the story that the Lord is weaving. God is always calling us to trust him not ourselves and that he is with us on our journey to somewhere better.

Abram left Egypt.

### 1. Pilgrimage

Genesis 13:1-2 Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb.  
<sup>2</sup> Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.

Abram moves in faith, and he leaves Egypt far wealthier than he entered. It is an act of pure grace that he survived and was even benefited by his fleeing from the promise of the Lord, a clear demonstration of the steadfastness of God to the covenant God had made. Therefore this traveling takes on the form

of a pilgrimage. It is related to us not just geographically but with the travel towards the spiritual markers of the promised land.

Genesis 13:3-4 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, <sup>4</sup> to the place where he had made an altar at the first. And there Abram called upon the name of the Lord.

He goes to Bethel, this means house of the Lord, but the city wasn't called that yet, at this point it was called Luz. But the text wants us to understand where he is headed. It is where he was when he went in his obedience to the call of the Lord. He even journeys back to the place where he had made an altar marking God's covenant with him, that God would give to him this land.

It is here that we see Abram call upon the name of the Lord.

This common phrase is noted in its absence when Abram decided to leave the promised land of Canaan during the famine. But here we see that a shift has occurred in Abram's heart. He has experienced in a tangible the unmerited grace of the Lord in Egypt and it shifts his heart. Here we are seeing a different story from last week.

This opens us up to see what it is that changes our hearts. Abram's heart changes as he begins to experience the grace of the Lord. It is an act of literal repentance, as he walks away from his own ways and in the direction of the Lord's promises.

Romans 2:4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Look at how Paul understands the draw towards repentance that the Lord offers. Riches of kindness and forbearance and patience are meant to lead us to repent. This repentance can be denied to our doom. But likewise it breaks down the misconception that God's grace is an excuse for an unchanged heart while it is actually the very mechanism for growth.

Now with this change of heart, the pressure on his adherence to the promise of God mounts once again, and once again it is in the form of the apparent inadequacy of the land that God promised Abram.

## 2. Pressure

Genesis 13:5-6 And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, <sup>6</sup> so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together,

Lot and Abram are sharing the same plot of land in Canaan, but the land is insufficient for their great wealth. They are growing in flocks and herds and tents, and there was beginning to erupt a dispute amongst their herdsmen. This is an open range situation, in the midst of a land which is populated by Canaanites and Perizzites, but notice the tension is internal to the family.

The options are to turn on one another, leave the land again noting it's insufficiency, or seek something higher. And Abram proposes to seek something higher.

Genesis 13:8 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.

It's so important to note that Abram reasons for peace because he understands they are united as kinsmen. This is an important theme throughout Genesis even so far. It is the perfect opposite to Cain's question back to God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Abram assumes that he is in fact his brother's keeper. You see how his renewed vertical commitment to the Lord flows out horizontally into the relationships in his life. This is always the case.

Genesis 13:9 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."

Rather than crush his brother, Abram places his relationship at the forefront, and opens up his hand so that his brother can choose for himself where he would like to go.

This is the type of move of generosity you can make when you have confidence that it is the Lord who blesses and the world is more than problems of scarcity where you take what you can get. If Abram had entertained this problem of scarcity in the same way that he did the original famine, he either would have left the land himself, recognizing its inadequacy, or he would have turned on his kinsmen. Allowing the strife to grow. But instead Abram trusts the Lord with the outcome and generously opens his hand to his brother. Just as the Lord generously opened His hand to Abram.

### **3. Eyes of Flesh, Eyes of Faith**

Genesis 13:10-11 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, ... <sup>11</sup> So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, ... Thus they separated from each other.

Here we are given two parallel descriptions of the kinsmen. One lifts up his own eyes, and the other looks to the Lord.

Lot lifts up his eyes and he compares his options, the land of Canaan, and the lush land of the Jordan valley. The land of the Jordan valley, just by looking at it contains the benefits of Egypt. It is fertile and well watered, and from all the assessment one can make is the obvious choice. So Lot chooses this valley.

Abram stays put in the land of promise, the land of Canaan. It's not much to look at, but God has promised Abram this land. The text gives us the outcome of Lot's assessment.

Genesis 13:12-13 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.

Lot chooses by what the eyes of flesh could see, but he ends up surrounded by wickedness. Abram however lived according to a different standard, a standard of faith in something that couldn't be seen yet but instead only existed in a promise. And where Abram's faith led him, God gives him sight.

Genesis 13:14-15 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.

Lot lifted up his own eyes, but Abram is told by God to lift up his eyes. God is showing Abram something he couldn't see on his own, something that could only be seen by the eyes of faith in the character of God. From the place where Abram was standing, he looked north, south, east and west. And God promises to give to Abram everything that he sees, to him and his offspring forever. God re-affirms his covenant and turns Abram's faith into sight. God then expands his covenant regarding his children.

Genesis 13:16 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.

The promise of God stretches beyond what he can say off into a future even including us in this room, to a place of incomprehensibility. God's promise of grace literally surpasses knowledge. And from here in this vision God calls Abram to walk.

Genesis 13:17-18 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.

Abram obeys, and moves forward walking in the vision of the hope to which he has been called and builds another altar to the Lord. Now I want to connect this to our hope in Christ. Because this section seems to be working in the back of Paul's mind in his letter to the Ephesians, as he considers not just us dwelling in the promised land but Christ dwelling in our hearts. Paul prays that we;

Ephesians 3:18-19 <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

You see how Paul stands us up to understand this more incredible wonder that Christ gave himself that we might be saved and dwells in our hearts by His Spirit. And just as Abram looked north south east and west, we grasp breadth length height and depth of Christ's love towards us. Just as the promise of offspring surpassed knowledge so too does the love of Christ towards us surpass knowledge. Then Paul, urges us to walk in faith in this incredible promise of God towards us in Christ.

Ephesians 4:1-3 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

In the same way that Abram's faith vertically flows forth horizontally ours is called to do the same. Come to Christ, the true offspring of Abraham who brings us into the promise. Come to Christ, whose love stretches far beyond the borders of Canaan and off into eternity. Come to Christ who freely gave himself for us when we we're still sinners, just like God's free grace towards Abram. And walk in a manner worthy of this calling. Look with eyes of faith, and walk.