

## SESSION #4

- the next incident in Abraham's life provides a **counterpart** to the previous story
- now we see a marvelous model of **faithfulness** in how Abraham acts

### D. FAITH IN ACTION AGAIN

Gen 13:5-12

<sup>5</sup> Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. <sup>6</sup> Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. <sup>7</sup> And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock...

<sup>8</sup> So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we *are* brethren. <sup>9</sup> *Is* not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If *you take* the left, then I will go to the right; or, if *you go* to the right, then I will go to the left."

<sup>10</sup> And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. <sup>11</sup> Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. <sup>12</sup> Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched *his* tent even as far as Sodom.

- as the elder family member, Abraham did not need to give Lot a choice
  - but he believes God's promise concerning the land, and so risks everything by permitting Lot to make the first choice
- in the **famine/Egypt** story, Abraham did **not trust** God's promise
  - so he acted rashly on his own, motivated by fear, with the outcome being **disasters** (curses)
- now his **trusting** in God's promise makes him gracious & generous, and results in  **blessing**
- Abraham's actions produce consequences; but so too do **Lot's**
  - no time to explore his story here, but note the **tragic choice** Lot makes here
  - apparently his contact with wealthy Egypt and his own increase in net worth when they left there, thanks to Abraham's generosity to him, stimulated a taste for even more material wealth
  - so Lot makes his choice here on the basis of *external* appearance and *selfish* interests ("it was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt"), but completely ignoring the unseen **spiritual reality** ("the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.")
- ...choosing where to live solely on the basis of *economic gain* at the *expense of spiritual life* would later prove to have a disastrous effect on him and his whole family
- it's a lesson that some of **us** ought to consider carefully as we make family decisions

- as ‘children of Abraham’ (Gal. 3:7) our **actions also matter**; they have consequences for us & for others (“*you will always reap what you sow.*” – Gal. 6:7)
- but at the same time we must recognize that regardless of our decisions **God** will still be **faithful** to His promises  
*“Do you think... faithlessness cancels out his faithfulness? Not on your life! Depend on it: God keeps his word even when the whole world is lying through its teeth.”* (Rom. 3:3-4 The Message)

## Gen 13:14-17

<sup>14</sup> And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are – northward, southward, eastward, and westward; <sup>15</sup> for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants\* forever. <sup>16</sup> And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, *then* your descendants also could be numbered. <sup>17</sup> Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you."

- God now provides some additional, wonderful details concerning what His promise to Abram will involve in terms of the extent of the Land and the number of his offspring
- notice: Abraham was told by God to “lift up [his] eyes...and look”
  - the one who in his dealings with Lot had refused to live by *sight*, but by faith in the unseen promises of an unseen God, was now told to “**look**”!
  - St. Augustine wrote, “Faith is to believe what we do not see, and the reward of this faith is to see what we believe.”

## E. So...What does it mean to embrace the call of God?

- I saw a cartoon a while ago in which the pastor was addressing his congregation from the pulpit: “I’ve stopped expecting you to make **leaps** of faith, but it would be nice to see a **hop** now and then.”  
 ...leaping or hopping – what’s involved in the life of faith?
- Os Guinness in his book, “The Call”, wrote –  
 “...God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we **are**, everything we **do**, and everything we **have** is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to his summons and service.”

What, then, does it mean to embrace the call of God?

### 1. Shifting the focus for our security

- “No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve both God and Money.” (Mt. 6:24)
- we dare not be ‘schizo-Christians’; God calls us to commitment to One Master alone

### 2. Obeying the unseen God with His unseen promises

- this requires “faith” – “Believing the promise without any visible evidence” as Brueggemann puts it
- in other words: “trust without reservation”

### 3. Trusting God's faithfulness not our faith

- through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, *God calls us* as He did Abraham
  - His call rests on promises to which we respond in faith
  - but our **focus** must remain on the **GOD** of those promises, *not* on our faith (which will falter at times), and *not* even on the promises themselves

### 4. Becoming a worshiper of God

- two physical things characterize Abraham's walk of faith – note 12:8 (“he went on... he pitched his **tent**...he built an **altar**”) and similarly in the final verse in this passage (13:18 – “Abram moved his **tents**...to Hebron, where he built an **altar** to the LORD.”)
  - ...he **pitched tents**, and he **built altars**
  - his frequent building of **altars** shows that Abraham was a worshiper of God
    - he often built altars to God, and revisited them (this was particularly significant in 13:4 **after his failure** in Egypt – he got back on track with God)
- if you want to embrace the call of God, are you building any altars?

### 5. Becoming a pilgrim

- by building **altars** Abraham made *permanent* statements about the God who was solid as a rock, who “does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17)
- but by living in **tents**, Abraham was a faith **pilgrim**, constantly on the *move*
  - ...he was a stranger/pilgrim in this world (Heb 11:13-14 tells us that the patriarchs “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they *seek a homeland*.”)
- Brueggemann writes that “*Faith* ...is the capacity to embrace [the] announced future with such passion that the present can be relinquished for the sake of that future.”

A **fugitive** is one who is running from home.

A **vagabond** is one who has no home.

A **stranger** is one away from home.

But a **pilgrim** is someone who is on his way home.

- and we who share Abraham's faith must also be ‘**faith pilgrims**’
  - ...**building altars to God** but not putting down permanent roots here
  - ...**renouncing short-term ‘gains’** in the present in order to embrace the future
  - ...**focusing our faith** not *downward* on that which is visible, but *upward* on Him who is invisible and who calls us – all of us – to center our hopes & faith in Him alone