

PUTTING OTHERS FIRST OR CHOOSING FOR YOURSELF

Genesis 13:5-18

Sunday September 26th 2010 Morning Service

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1. Conflict Of Interest

Between Abram & his nephew Lot. This was a significant relationship: Lot is frequently mentioned in the account of Abram. See 11:27, 31, 12:4, 5 & 13:1. Lot had accompanied Abram from the beginning. In 2 Pet 2:7-8 Peter refers to Lot as a 'righteous' man. Here was a close bond. Satan loves to damage important relationships in families and churches. It seems to come out of the blue:

1) Back on track: at end of chapter 12 Abram struggled to trust God but v4 describes Abram back in prayer and dependence on God.

2) Material plenty: God provided generously for Abram: 12:5, 12:16, 3:2. Lot shared in this prosperity v5.

But the prosperity of Abram & Lot was the problem: v6-7. The land could not sustain them all. Too many mouths, cattle, sheep, goats, camels, people: not enough pasture & water. Here Abram acts to resolve the conflict. Good relationships need initiatives, they are not accidental. Heb 12:14 'make every effort to live in peace with all men'. Rom 12:18 'If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with every one.' Let Abram be an example to us. At one level Abram's solution is very simple: v9 'Let's part company'. But as they resolve the they reveal 2 totally different set of values.

2. Contrast Of Values

1. The Generous Heart Abram lets go. Gives to Lot the total freedom to choose what he wants & says he will simply go where Lot doesn't want to. He had a right as the head of the family to choose first. He had the chance to choose the best. But he surrenders his rights & his gain. This man did not cling to what he had (his status) nor grasp for what he hadn't (the best land).

Why was Abram able to act in this way? What is his secret?

1) He was in relationship with God: v4 & 18. Whole context of the passage is Abram's relationship with God. His response to Lot is a reflection of his relationship with God. How God has treated us should shape how we

treat others. Jesus did not insist on his rights or gain: see Phil 2:3-5. We ought to be people who can afford to let go of our rights, of our pride, our self gain because we follow the Saviour who went to Calvary for us. Abram is a man of no fixed address but one fixed relationship: he had already surrendered his grip on things to follow God by leaving Ur. He had possessions but they did not possess him.

2) He was in relationship with Lot: Look at the logic of v8: 'for we are brothers'. He is saying 'our relationship is not defined by this issue'. How tragic if our problems shape our relationships. We must be brothers, if we claim to be Christians.

2. The Grabbing Heart 2 sad things about Lot's response.

1) No other: he thinks of no other than himself: he gave no honour either to God or Abram. He did not pray to God either in thanks or in request for guidance: nor does he express any sense of gratitude and wonder at how Abram is treating him. That's how sin works: we lose sight of God, we lose sight of others and it is we ourselves who fill our minds & priorities. So Lot v11 'chose for himself'. Is that how you are living: centre of my life is me? Opposite to how Christ lived who went to Cross for us.

2) No wisdom: Lot went by what he saw: v10 'Lot looked up & saw'. What his eyes told him was true: that was the best land. But the Bible has some v strong warning about just judging things by what we see. See Numbers 15:39. Also 1 Jn 2:16-17 'Everything in the world- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes & the boasting of what he has and does- comes not from the Father but from the world'. Lot could see fertile land but could not see the wickedness v12-13. If we simply judge by surface of things we will not be able to act wisely. We need to ask ourselves of all our choices, not only does it look good, but what are the spiritual consequences? What is most likely to cause me to grow in faith & obedience: what is most likely to encourage others in their faith? Matthew Henry wrote: 'In all our choices this principle should overrule us. That that is best for us which is best for our souls.'

3. Consequence Of Choices

1) Lot the loser. Lot went down a path that seemed to offer rich advantages, but he paid a terrible price. He gets drawn into the world of Sodom: v12 'he lived near Sodom': 14:12 Lot 'was living in Sodom'. In chapter 19 when God's judgement came on Sodom Lot is rescued but he loses his wife & his daughters follow the values of Sodom & commit incest. What Lot grabbed brought him tears & misery. Don't live Lot's way. Beware of the grabbing heart

2) Abram the gainer. It seems as if Abram has lost out. Lot takes the best & Abram is left with the rest. But the last word here is not Abram's or Lot's. v14 'the LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him...' In fact it is only God's verdict that matters. God gives two things to Abram that he also give today

1) Promises to believe: of great gain. Firstly, the promise of land: v15 The LORD said 'All the land you see I will give to you & your offspring for ever'. And secondly God promises him offspring: here is man with not one child but God says he would have so many that they would be uncountable. So Abram has lost nothing. God gives us promises: of eternal riches greater than we can ever tell. The are ours not by grabbing & not by seeing, but by believing.

2) Command to savour what will be his. God invites Abram v17 'Go walk through the length & breadth of the land for I am giving it to you'. The land was promised to him but not yet his. Descendants were promise to him but not one was yet born. God promises what we cannot yet see. He promises an eternal glory that far outweighs the troubles of this life. What God promises we can't yet see but we can savour. God wants us as his children to rejoice now in sure & certain hope of what is promised to us.

Abram gave up his rights but won everything. What values are you living by? What choices are you making? Whose footsteps are you following, Lot's or Abram's?

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