

# Genesis 12-13 • Faith Tested and Growing

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I'm glad we're finally in Genesis chapter 12, we can now start dealing with things that are real and not fiction. I'm joking, don't throw anything at me. Did you happen to know though, that there are a good many people, including those who would call themselves Christians, who believe that the first 11 chapters of Genesis are myth, yeah.

In fact, it's not terribly uncommon and they believe that it is at chapter 12, where we start dealing with actual history. And I of course believe that's a bunch of hooey and I think you probably do too. But it's nonetheless good to know, when you're talking to people kind of where they're coming from and what they believe and don't believe and that sort of thing.

But we are starting Genesis chapter 12 tonight and we're going to be talking here tonight about faith. And so I'll begin by kind of asking you, how's your faith doing? What I mean by that, and I know that, because that might sound like a convoluted question. But when I ask you how your faith is doing, I'm asking if you're growing in faith and if you think or believe that you are increasing in your trust of the Lord.

When things come up in your life that are challenging for which you may not see a quick answer, when things are scary, how's your faith then? Because, you know, we can answer the question, you know, at any given time in our lives when things are going pretty well and we will, probably most of us say, yeah, I'm doing pretty good, yeah, faith is doing good. But when we get tested, that's when we kind of find out what's really going on. As they say, where the rubber meets the road and we find out, you know, how our faith is doing.

So here we are and Abram is about to find out how his faith is doing. So let's begin here, Genesis chapter 12, it says, *“Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, (that's an important statement) and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.””* (ESV)

Now, I want you to stop here because just in these first 3 verses, we find a single command followed by 6 individual promises. And the single command is, go from your country. Now, anyone who has ever left their country, their homeland, would know that this is no small request. I have moved within the United States, you know, quite a ways, but never left my country. Sometimes it feels like it, I mean, you know, the difference between Minnesota and Oregon, you know, can seem like you're going to a different country, you know. I go back and I'm like, wow, they really talk weird.

By the way, one of the guys who got baptized on Sunday, you may not know this, you might have seen this guy getting baptized. He's about 50 years old or so, his name is Jason in case you remember seeing his picture coming up and you might have thought to yourself, I've never seen that guy around. Well, that's because he has never been around, he actually flew here from Iowa to get baptized and just had been, has been watching us online for a number of years. Happens to attend a church that doesn't do baptism by immersion but feels called to be there nonetheless in this church to minister the Lord.

And so he wrote me a couple of months ago and just said, do you mind if I come and take part in the baptism? I was like, oh, great. I mean, he took, he flew here and stayed for a few days and really neat. But you should have heard the guy, you should have heard the guy talk, I mean, talk about a Midwest.... Sometimes Sue and I would just giggle because it sounded like, you know, what we grew up with. He was so Midwestern in his... and it does seem like another land, but it isn't, of course.

So this is something that takes some faith. God says to Abram, go from your country, but notice the promises that go with it. First of all, in verse 1, first of all He says, go to the land that I will show you. Notice, He doesn't just say, leave your country, but He says, go to the land I will show you. In other words, the first promise is, I'll be there, I'll take you there, I'll show you when you get there, all right.

Secondly, He says, I'm going to make you a great nation. And what that means is, from your family, from your lineage, literally from your descendants, I will make a great nation. And then He says, the third thing in verse 1, He says, I will make your name great and of course, Abram is later kind of renamed by the Lord, Abraham.

And we certainly know that name. That name is remembered today as a man of great faith and so, you know, the Lord has obviously made good on all those promises. Verse 2, there are 3 more, He says, you will be a blessing, He says, I

will bless those who bless you and curse those who dishonor you. By the way, just a little tip. This is one of the reasons why the United States of America, back when it was a Christian nation, tried very much to be friends of Israel because there's this little interesting promise that God made. I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who dishonor you, yeah. So think about that next time you're in the voting booth.

And He goes on and He says, and in you, all the families of the earth will be blessed and that is a prophetic statement that lands all the way to the lineage that ends up with Messiah. Because all the families of the earth are blessed through the coming of Messiah. So here's wonderful promises given with this, really the single command. Even so, you know, it took faith on Abram's part. Let me show you a passage on the screen from Hebrews chapter 11, it says,

**Hebrews 11:8-9 (ESV)**

*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents...*

*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, (look at this) not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents...*

How would you feel if the Lord told you to go somewhere and then didn't tell you where it was going to be? We, you know, we would probably, being the big, you know, faith people we are, we'd say, fine, just show me. Just tell me where it is I'm going and we'll get started. No, you just get started, just start walking, I'll tell you when you get there, how about that? Now that is a walk of faith, isn't it? Yeah, well, that's exactly what Abraham did, he set out.

And so in verse 4, we read, “*So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. <sup>5</sup> And Abram took Sarai his wife, (who of course will later be renamed Sarah) and Lot his brother's son, ...*” So he had his nephew tagging along and by the way, it wasn't just his nephew, it was his nephew and his family, and all of his belongings, and his goods and servants and so, this is a big group.

And that's why it says, “<sup>5</sup> *...and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, (that's servants) and they set*

*out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, <sup>6</sup> Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.*” Now, you guys remember from our previous study that the Canaanites are the descendants of Canaan, who is the son of Ham, who is the son of Noah, all right? So you can see the generations and descendants that way.

And then in verse 7, I want you to notice this, it says, *“Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring (and the word is literally seed) I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.*” Now it's important to note here that God's promise to Abram at this time is future, did you catch that? He brought him to the land, but He said, I will give, He doesn't say I have given at this point, He says, I will give, all right.

And so, you know, this is something that Abram's descendants are ultimately going to enjoy, as far as you know, the possession of the land. So verse 8 goes on, *“From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. <sup>9</sup> And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.”*

And so if you know your geography the area of Palestine or Israel, you know that Abram and his entourage are slowly moving to the south as they make their way from the north to the south. Moving on up, you know, presumably in search of better fields to pasture their flocks and so forth. Remember, the Canaanites are using all of the fertile land and it's probably getting a little slim pickings in some of the areas. So he's moving through the land, finding better places to reside.

And so what we see here in these first, you know, 9 verses of the chapter, is God giving Abraham command; a directive coupled with promises. Abraham following that command, Abraham arriving at the land, the Lord confirming His promise. And now Abraham just kind of moving throughout the land, knowing that this is all kind of future. He says, I will give this to your seed, I will do this and so this is kind of where we are, so this is wonderful. Abraham's walking around this land with this wonderful promise, you know, in his heart that the Lord has given.

Now here's the interesting thing, whenever God gives a promise, it often is followed pretty quickly by a test, some kind of a test. And that's what happens next because in verse 10, we read these words. *“Now there was a famine in the land...”*

Now, I want you to stop there for just a moment and I want you to think about that word famine. Because the word famine refers to an extreme scarcity of food, right? And of course, there's no Albertsons down the block or, you know, any other kind of a grocery. You have to grow your food or you've got your flocks, you know, that sort of thing. But when there's scarcity of food, it usually is because there hasn't been rain for a period of time or there's been perhaps a locust infestation or you know, there could be other reasons.

We're not told why this famine has occurred, it's just there is now a scarcity of food. So you've got to put yourself in the position of Abram, he's got all these people that he's kind of in charge of, including his nephew and all the people that are with his nephew or part of his nephew's group and there's this scarcity of food. And we're kind of thinking, how are we going to, you know, feed everybody?

And the very next thing we read in this same verse, verse 10 is, "*So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land.*" Now I want you to stop there again for just a moment because I have a question for you. What's missing from this narrative? It's just, it's worth thinking about and I'll tell you what's missing is a word from the Lord. What's missing is a directive from the Lord. All we know, and all Abram knows at this particular point is, there's a famine in the land, and that means food is scarce, that's all he knows.

But there is nothing in the text to suggest to us that God instructed Abraham, I should say Abram, it's still Abram at this point. I'm going to probably say Abraham a few times, so you'll have to give me grace. But there's nothing to suggest that God had instructed Abram to go to Egypt or to leave the land in any capacity. Yes, food is scarce. The last thing we know is that Abram was told, I'm giving you this land, that's the last thing God has said to him. I'm giving you this land, you know, and so forth, that's it.

So you might be kind of thinking to yourself, pastor Paul, what's your point? Are you suggesting here that he should have just stayed in the land and starved to death? Well, I would follow up your question with another question of my own, and that is, is God unable to sustain Abram in the land that he called him to dwell in? That's the real question, is God able or unable to take care of Abram in this situation? Is a famine too great for the Lord to handle? Is this something that, you know, Abram was justified then in picking up and taking his whole family and the whole entourage and heading, you know, to Egypt?

Well, you know, we, any of us who have any kind of faith in the Lord, I think we'd probably do okay if this was an answer on a test. Yes, God is able to take care of people in a famine, but it's one thing to get a good answer or write the correct answer on a test. It's another thing to be in the test like Abram is right now with a scarcity of food, a huge amount of people that are his responsibility and the knowledge that well, we've got to do something. We got to do something, what are we going to do? Well, there you go.

Well, you know, Abram is kind of new to this whole walk of faith, maybe we can cut him a little slack here, but we're going to see that whenever we step out in our own wisdom to solve a problem, it invites a whole series of other problems. So that's what we're going to see.

Look at verse 11, *“When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, ‘I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance,’”* Now, this is not just a husband making a pass at his wife, you know, and some kind of an empty compliment. We're going to see this in just a minute. So it goes on to say, *“<sup>12</sup> and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. <sup>13</sup> Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake.”* All right, stop there people, let's talk about this a little bit.

So what is behind Abram's statement here to his wife? Is this about Sarai being a beautiful woman? Well, you know, kind of. Is it about the fact that men back in that time were brutal and if they saw a beautiful woman, they may very well kill her husband so that they can possess the woman, is it about that? Well, kind of, kind of. But you want to know what this is really about? Abram is afraid, it's about simple human fear.

But you see, that's kind of what brought Abram into this land in the first place. Rather than consulting the Lord, just looking at what he saw, which was famine, he was afraid they weren't going to have the food that they needed to sustain all of the people in their group, and so he left. And what happens when you begin to make decisions based on fear? You usually keep making decisions based on fear because you've given into that. You've started the journey, you know, down that road, that path, and the more you give into something, the easier it is to give into that thing, right? And so here we have the situation where Abram is afraid for his life and so what does he do because of his fear? He devises a plan to save his skin. That's what he's doing here.

Okay, Sarai, here's the deal, the men here are really corrupt and I have a real concern that they're going to take a look at you and you know, you are so drop

dead gorgeous that they're going to find out that I'm your husband, they're going to kill me so that they can have you. So let's do this, let's just say you're my sister, which as you probably know from reading the story in the past that was half true because she was his half-sister. But it was still a whole lie from the standpoint that it was based and founded in fear rather than trusting the Lord.

Here's the problem with the plan that Abram came up with, which was, again, to save his own skin. It places Sarai in danger, it puts her in a really difficult place because, you know, if the men believe him and they think that Sarai is really his sister, then they're going to think, well, she's available. And you know, they're going to just take her. Oh, one other thing, did you hear earlier that I said that when Abraham came into the land, he was 75 and that would mean that Sarai was probably at that time around 65. Let's say they spent a couple of years in the land of Canaan before the famine took place. I mean, it doesn't really say, let's say we're talking about a woman in her upper 60s and she is so gorgeous. Here, listen to what, what happens.

Verse 14, *“When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. <sup>15</sup> And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.”* Because obviously Abram and Sarai told everybody, we're brother and sister.

Okay, two things, again and I hope I'm not overemphasizing this, but this woman must have been such a knockout that the Egyptians not only noticed her, but they reported it back to the king. I mean, that is a pretty woman, right? And secondly, as we said, this land, this plan rather while it protected Abram, it puts Sarai in very real danger, but not just Sarai, but also the plan of God and that's important to remember.

What was God's promise; from your seed, from your descendants, from your lineage. Abram, I have a plan, I'm going to bless the world, the entire world is going to be blessed through you, through you. And now that whole plan is in danger, because of what? Because of fear.

All right, it goes on verse 16, *“And for her sake he (and that's Pharaoh) dealt well with Abram; (this is the really funny part) and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels.”* In other words, all those things were given to Abram because he was considered to be the brother of this really beautiful woman. And so in exchange for his wife, which of course the Egyptians didn't know at this time was his wife. They're blessing him with all these things and this really messes with a lot of people's minds. I've had people ask me in the past, so Abraham lied, right? Yup. Then

why did God allow him to be blessed? Yeah, I know. Those are tough questions, you know.

Anyway, verse 17, *“But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues (we're not told what those plagues were) because of Sarai, Abram's wife. <sup>18</sup> So Pharaoh called Abram and said, “What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? <sup>19</sup> Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go.” <sup>20</sup> And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, (and that's kind of like guards to run him out of town) and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.”*

They didn't ask for all that stuff back, they didn't say, here's your wife and I want that other stuff back. He just kind of, they let him get away with all this stuff, isn't that interesting? And by the way, you might be wondering, so was there any kind of physical contact between Pharaoh and Sarai. No, I seriously doubt the Lord would have allowed that to happen.

When a woman came into a king's harem, she would usually go through a long process of being readied to go in and be with the king. We see this in the Book of Esther and so this is, it might've been years before she even saw the face of the king. So I, you know, I'm sure the Lord wouldn't have allowed that to happen.

So we assume that the Lord somehow revealed to Pharaoh in his court that Sarai was in fact the cause of the plagues that had been happening, you know, in his kingdom. And as a result, what happens to Abram? He is humiliated, you know, he's called before Pharaoh, Pharaoh kind of gives him a dressing down. What are you doing here? What are you lying to me about?

That's not a very good witness, by the way. And so he confronts him with this lie and then has him escorted, you know, to the borders of Egypt. And suddenly, Abram is forced to do what he should have done from the very beginning and that is trust the Lord for God's provision.

Because guess what? He just got booted out of Egypt and he literally got escorted out. And so he's now outside of Egypt, where supposedly because of the Nile and so forth, there's crops that are growing and there's some food to be had and so forth. But Abram's not there anymore because he got scared, he lied, and he put his wife in danger. So does that mean this is it for Abram? This is the end? Well, thankfully, no, you know, God didn't forsake Abram at this point. But you know, still this story is just absolutely full of lessons for all of us who

think that we're smarter than God at times. You know, we do have times like that when we think we're smarter than God and rather than go to Him, talk to Him, trust in Him, we come up with our own plan.

It's like, don't worry about this God, I've got this one, I think I got this one taken care of, I can figure this out, you just sit back and I'll handle this. And this is kind of what happens you know, things go from bad to worse. Or it's also a lesson for those of us who think God needs our help, you know, to solve problems.

But the whole chapter and really the theme of the chapter strikes at the heart of what we would call the life of faith and what it is to trust God. And to trust Him, especially in those times when fear rises up that would direct us away from trusting God. Because again, guys, we all know this, trusting God is a cinch when things are going good, but the first time a test comes into your life, now you find out what your faith is really made of.

And when Abram was faced with a scary situation, he saw, the Lord allowed him graciously to see. And can I suggest to you that when you fail in these areas and we all have, I know that, this is God graciously showing you, He's not condemning you, that's Satan's job. He does a really good job of it but that's not God. God does not condemn you, Satan will condemn you. But God is graciously allowing you to see and understand those areas where your faith has stumbled so that you can come to Him and say, I blew it, I took this thing into my own hands, I worked out my own deliverance or what I thought was going to be my own deliverance, and I blew it and I confess that to you. And I ask you to forgive me for not trusting you.

That's what God wants us to do with our failures, our failures of faith. He wants you to bring them to Him so that you can lay them at His feet and ask for His grace and courage and strength to walk in faith next time the test comes.

Chapter 13, *“So Abram went up from Egypt, (he's learned an important lesson here) 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.”* And again, this is, a lot of this came because he was made even richer through what happened in Egypt.

And it says, *“<sup>3</sup> 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.”* This is what Abraham should have done when the famine

showed up, he should have stayed where he was and called on the name of the Lord. But guess what? We're now back there, he's back where he started.

And you know, there is some interesting language here, it's hard to avoid seeing those words, isn't it? In those verses, words like *"beginning"* and *"at the first."* And that speaks not just of Abram coming back to where he was, but it speaks of the renewal of getting back into the place of the center of God's will, you know. Where we were before we freaked out and fear drove us out of out from under His will and that's what fear does.

So now he has come back, he's now back where he was told to be and now he's back doing what he should have done; calling upon the name of the Lord. But you know, even back in the land that God directed him to live in, Abram is going to deal with some problems, but let's see how he deals with them and if he deals with them differently here, shall we? Here we go.

*Verse 5, "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, <sup>7</sup> and there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land."*

And like we said before, you know, the Canaanites, they'd been there entrenched in the land for quite a while. They had taken up obviously the best places, the most fertile land for their crops, for their pasture land and so forth. And Abraham and Lot who are moving together as this enormous group with huge flocks, they're having, yeah, a very difficult time finding a place to pasture their herds and so forth just because they're such a big group. If they were a smaller group, it'd be easier to fit in among the Canaanites.

So <sup>8</sup> *Then Abram (it says in verse 8) said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. (in other words, we're family) <sup>9</sup> 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."*

<sup>10</sup> *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, in the direction of Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)* So we're told here, parenthetically, that region where Sodom and Gomorrah existed, which is now in infertile, is that the right word? Infertile? And really

decimated because of the judgment, which is going to come later, was at that time a very fertile and very lush area.

So it says in verse 11, *“So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other.”*<sup>12</sup> Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. (and then we’re given this ominous statement)<sup>13</sup> *Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.”*

Now, I want you to stop there for just a moment because we need to talk about these first 13 verses a little bit. Because there are some important statements that are in these verses that tell us quite a bit about these 2 men. And the first statement is about Abram and it's the second part of verse 9, if you look with me in your Bible at the second part of verse 9. This is where Abram says to Lot, *“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.”* What is he saying here? Well, very simply, he's giving Lot the first choice.

And this may sound like a very gracious thing to do and it is a very gracious thing to do, especially in light of the fact that, you know, there was strife going on. Whenever there's strife going on, it's easy to get mad at people because of the strife and just kind of go, you know, this isn't working out, why don't you just like get lost? And I don't really care where you go, you know.

I mean, that's sometimes the feelings can kind of build up a little bit but Abram's keeping his cool. He's been very gracious in light of all these things, but it wasn't just gracious, it was also trusting. Because Abram, you know, he probably knew that given the choice, Lot was going to take the best-looking land, he probably knew that, he knew the kind of a man Lot was. And that meant that Abram would need to continue doing what he had now been doing since coming back from Egypt and that is trusting the Lord for His provision rather than trying to work it out on his own.

So that tells you a lot about Abram, doesn't it? What does it tell you? He's already learned some things from his failure in Egypt. Well, that's good, we like to see this, this is healthy. We want to see that people are kind of learning some things from their mistakes, I wish we all learned from our mistakes, all right.

The second statement that we need to focus on is about the man Lot and that's given to us in verse 10. And it says, *“And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered.”* And what we learn about the man Lot is that he made his decisions according to physical benchmarks. He looked with

his eyes, right? He lifted up his eyes, the text says, and saw. And so he saw what he saw and liked what he saw and so he chose what he saw without considering any of the spiritual implications.

What's the last thing we read in verse 13? *“Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.”* Lot didn't consider that, he just saw what he saw, he liked what he saw, he took what he saw. And by the way, this decision, as you probably well know, is going to come back and it's going to bite Lot and his family hard, you know.

And I've had people, come up to me all breathless and happy. “Hey, pastor Paul, I want you to know we're going to be leaving, we're going to be moving away, we took a job over in the other side of the state or somewhere you know, and it's really going to be great, better money, yeah. We're just, there's a promotion, better money, it's going to be great for our family.” I go, “yeah, that's exciting, where are you guys going to go to church?” “Well, we haven't looked into that yet, but we're just really excited.”

See there's a lot of times we too will make decisions based on just the physical implications of what's in front of us. It's really just like Lot, we're just looking at it with our human eyes and we're saying, that's good, I want that. Rather than backing up, talking to the Lord. Lord, is this where you want us to be? What kind of a place is this? Is this going to be a healthy spiritual environment for my family? Yeah, we're going to be making all kinds of dough, but is this going to be a good move on that spiritual level? Because, you know, I'm not just responsible to put food in my kid's mouth, I'm responsible to put godliness in their hearts, so is this going to be a place to do that?

And when we don't consider the implications like Lot, those things can come back and bite us hard, you know. And you know, it's interesting, you know, this whole kind of an exchange between these two men gives us kind of a fresh insight into a very familiar passage and exhortation. Let me put it up on the screen, you guys all know this from Proverbs 3,

**Proverbs 3:5 (ESV)**

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.*

And if we have to elaborate on what your own understanding means, it really means what you see with your eyes, what you hear with your ears. What you consider with your own particular understanding of the situation and how you think it's going to impact you based on very simple, and frankly, very carnal sort

of things. And so, the exhortation that's given to us here is, you know, trust in the Lord with all of your heart, don't trust on, don't trust in yourself. But, you know, we read this verse, by the way, I consider this to be the most difficult verse in the Bible in terms of walking it out, I do and I'll just admit that to you. Because every fiber of my being wants to make my own way, wants to think through a situation based on my own understanding, wants to make decisions based on the implications that I want to consider, not what necessarily God wants me to consider.

And so this verse, this simple verse that we all know and probably many of us have committed to memory goes against every natural impulse of our humanity, you know? But you know what? As we keep going through these studies in Genesis and we keep reading about these experiences these individuals have related to trusting the Lord in faith, we're going to see Proverbs 3:5 borne out, or at least the wisdom of it, borne out again and again and again. And I'm sure you probably already have in your own life, if you've been walking with the Lord long enough. You've seen the wisdom of this passage borne out and you've seen the opposite as well, you know, when you do trust in your own understanding.

But you know, as the apostle Paul said in his second letter to the Corinthians, let me show you this one.

### **2 Corinthians 5:7 (ESV)**

*... for we walk by faith, not by sight.*

See that's the opposite of what Lot did, isn't it? He wasn't walking by faith, he looked at the Jordan Valley and he goes, yeah, that's it right there, it's beautiful, it's gorgeous, we're going that way. We'll take this way, thanks for the first choice, we're going there, it's gorgeous. That's walking by sight and we all know what that is, we all know what that's like because we walk by sight every day. Even though we're told to walk by faith.

So, anyway, Lot has chosen the best land and Abram, you know, as you know, made a choice based on trusting God above all else because he learned something from that failure in Egypt. Now check out what happens next after Abram responds in faith. It says in verse 14, "*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.'*"

In other words, Abram, don't sweat what Lot chose. Just because Lot chose what appears physically to be the best direction, I want you to know something, son, I'm giving it all to you anyway, it's all yours anyway, so don't worry about it.

And when you read between the lines of Abram's actions here with his nephew, you can see that he knew in his heart that God was his possession, you know, God was his possession. When you think about all the possessions that you have and you may have a lot or you may have very little, but when you gather them all up and add them all up, you can say this is your worth, you know, on the earth. This is your worth, this is the value of your estate. I always thought that was a weird statement. It's like, estate? I just live in a house but that's what they call it anyway. Here's the value of your estate and those air earthly numbers.

But the fact of the matter is, the Lord is your possession, and He owns the cattle on 1,000 hills, which is just an idiom to say, He owns it all anyway, you know. God is our possession. And that's why the author of Hebrews wrote what he did up on the screen when he said,

**Hebrews 13:14 (ESV)**

*For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.*

Right? At least we're supposed to, and yet at times we find ourselves falling back into seeking a city here and thinking about our possessions here, but we have no lasting possessions here. Like they like to tell us, you can't take it with you. People ask, you know, after a rich man died, how much do he leave behind? Somebody else says, everything, because that's the answer. You know, when you die, you leave everything that you have here on this earth.

Okay, so the Lord says to Abraham, verse 16, *“I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, (which is to say, uncountable) 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.”* And I want you to remember something people. God keeps telling Abraham that He's going to give this to him and his offspring but please don't forget, at this juncture in their lives, Abraham and Sarai have no children, so this is all on faith.

When God tells you something, He says, you know, your offspring are going to grow and grow and grow to the point where it's like uncountable and you're like, cool, when does that all get started anyway? Because right now we've got nothing even to look at, to say, this is going to grow one day. There is no, this there's no, this, there's no this, there's no child, there's no offspring. So you see

what God's doing to Abram, He keeps giving him these promises that are dependent solely on faith to accept, solely on faith, right?

Verse 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.”* And I want you to notice God told Abram to walk throughout the land and view all that would be his possession but of course, at this time, the land was, you know, it was being possessed by the Canaanites. And if Abram again were to look with his physical eyes, again, I want you to put yourself in the position of Abram. I imagine He probably took him up on a high hill or something and said, just turn around 360 degrees, just look at it all, this is, I'm giving all this to you.

But when you, you have to think of what Abram saw with his eyes. He saw the Canaanites, he saw their cities, he saw their developments, he saw their areas where they're pasturing their flocks and growing their fields. That's what he saw and yet God is saying, it's all yours.

So again, what Abram is seeing with his eyes and the promise he's hearing with his ears really are conflicting; they're contradictory. So this is not just a matter of accepting something by faith on a plain white board that has nothing on it. This is accepting by faith, the opposite of what your eyes are seeing currently. That makes sense?

Do you see how that takes more faith? Because you have to unsee what you're seeing with your physical eyes so that you can begin to take hold of what you need to look at with your spiritual eyes and that's very, very challenging. Boy, you know, but that's, isn't that what God does? You know what, what God did there for Abram is what He does for you and me too, in terms of what He wants us to look at.

We're told, not just to look around and look at the land, we're told to look at the whole of the Word of God and all of the promises that God has made to us as believers. And He's saying, these are yours, these are yours, you see all these promises here, these are yours. And yet, if you're going to look at your life and what you see right in front of your eyes of flesh, that isn't going to impact you very significantly.

God's sitting there telling you all the things that He's promised for you and yet you're looking at your life, you're looking at the physical life and you're going, well, there's a contradiction there. You think there wasn't for Abram? You think there wasn't for him too? Yes, there was. God is calling you and me to look at

His promises, not with eyes of flesh, but with eyes of faith, because that's how you're going to see what He has for you.

So we're going to close with this final reminder from Hebrews 11:1.

**Hebrews 11:1 (ESV)**

*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

Listen, if you can see it, you don't have to have faith for it. Faith is what we have for the things that are unseen, but that God has promised, right. That's challenging, but that's the life of faith that we live every single day. The challenge to look not with eyes of flesh, but with the eyes of the Spirit; the eyes of faith. Let's pray.

Jesus, we love you and we love your Word and we recognize here tonight in these stories of Abram and Lot that we are more often like Lot than we are Abram. We're more often, well, and even Abram we're often like him when it comes to giving into fear, trying to fix problems on our own, doing things that we were never told from the Lord to do and then, like Lot, we many times just look with our human eyes and admire and covet. Lord, forgive us.

We believe that because we're your children and because we've received your Holy Spirit, that we have the capacity to see with the eyes of faith. We're just fairly untried in that area and we're just not very used to doing it, we're not accustomed to looking with those eyes, instead, we default to the eyes of flesh.

Please, Lord, forgive us and help us to not just look with eyes of faith, but having done so, to trust in the Lord with all of our hearts and to lean not on our own ability to figure it out. Lord, you have told us over and over and over in your word that you are worthy of our trust. And I pray my father God that each and every one of us would devote ourselves again and anew like Abram to go back to Bethel, back to where we started and call upon the name of the Lord and determined to trust in you. We thank you and praise you for this time, for this study in your Word. Continue to speak to us we pray in Jesus precious name and all God's people said, amen.

God bless you.