

# Out of Egypt

*Goodlands, Badlands or Which Lot will Lot be Alloted?*

- <sup>1</sup> So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb [wilderness].
- <sup>2</sup> Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.
- <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.
- <sup>5</sup> 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.
- <sup>8</sup> 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.
- <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.)
- <sup>11</sup> 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.
- <sup>13</sup> Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.
- <sup>14</sup> 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, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever.
- <sup>15</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>16</sup> Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you."
- <sup>17</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.

Genesis 13:1-18

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## How Genesis 13 is Often Preached

Here are some sermon titles from sermoncentral.com on our passage today: "Improper Priorities." "Steps in Backsliding." "Where are You Pitching Your Tent?" "The Power of a Choice." "How Do We Deal With Failure." "Which Will We Choose." "Moral Lessons in Abraham's Life." This last one gives the outline of our passage as follows: 1. Abraham is a devoted person (vs. 1-4). Abraham is a peace

maker (5-8). Abraham is an unselfish person (9). Abraham is a humble person (10ff). The conclusion? These four things can become a pattern for living.

What is the purpose of these seven sermons, which are representative of the majority of sermons to be found at this site on this passage? The purpose is to [use Abram's life as a model](#) of how to live, or Lot's life as a model of how not to live. Who is the focus on? It is on you, me, us and our good and bad works. Why would I bring this up? What is wrong with this?

There is nothing wrong, inherently, with seeing something good in another person and wanting to emulate it, or seeing something bad in someone else and warning people not to be like that. But that isn't exactly a Christian ideal. Complete pagans like to do those things, because they have consciences and know right from wrong. Sometimes, the Bible may actually ask us to do this too. But what if the story itself makes no such application? What if the purpose of the author in writing it had little to nothing to do with this kind of application? Why are so many sermons written in just this way, when both of these things are true much more of the time than we care to admit?

There are [a host of reasons](#) for this, I believe. We live in a culture infatuated with [self-help](#). We have placed around ourselves pastors that are emulating the culture more than we care to admit. We [don't really know any better](#), because no one has ever taught us that perhaps there is more to the Bible than just reading it to see how to improve your life. It is easier to come to church and write down three things that I can do when I leave, than it is to think deeply about a passage. Maybe we are just in love with ourselves, and just really like hearing about "me" because it feeds our [narcissism](#), an epidemic by the way, that has reached catastrophic proportions in our country, no thanks in large part to today's churches.

The "How-To" sermon that fills American churches each Sunday from passages that have no law in them is a soap box that I get on from time to time. It was not really on my radar this week, until I read the following commentary:

Genesis 13 is a regular in children's Sunday school curriculum. A large majority of the curricula produced by the publishing houses emphasizes behavioral objectives; that is, the lessons are designed to instruct the children in appropriate ways to act. One of the earliest behavioral objectives driven home to children is that they should learn to share their things and let others have first choice. Consequently, the story of Abram and Lot is recruited (or more accurately, commandeered) to make the point. Is there a behavioral objective that is consciously taught by the author in this passage? ... Biblical narratives generally resist moralization ... If our Bible lessons focus on something the Bible does not intend to teach, what value is there in using the Bible stories? If

we neglect their authoritative teaching in favor of driving home the points we want to make, even if our points are good points, we distort the text and model poor methods of Bible study.<sup>1</sup>

I thought, I might as well tell you about his comments, because it is good to be reminded about this from time to time. Yet, perhaps it is kind an **ironic** thing that I would choose to make this kind of observation at the beginning of the sermon, when I know that the story itself does *not have this in mind*. Maybe in some strange way, that makes what I'm saying pure hypocrisy. And yet, I have been convinced for a long time that this kind of preaching and teaching that disregards the intent of the story has been perhaps the single most damaging force in Christianity in my lifetime. It is something we cannot hear enough, because the forces pushing us away from what the Bible actually says to what we want it to say are almost irresistible. It is actually a kind of bondage to be so focused on yourself that you can't see the goodness of the text in front of you for what it is. It is like being in Egypt, with its leeks and melons and cucumbers and onions and garlic ... and **slavery**.

But when we come to learn how to read the Bible and give its applications as they come to us, then we will have arrived at the only Word that is able to give freedom to the captive, food for the hungry, water for the thirsty, sight to the blind, renewal to the tired, lasting riches to the spiritually poor. Like Israel or Lot, if your **eyes are fixed on what they see** rather than on Christ by faith, everything I'm saying will sound like nonsense.

### **Genesis 13: Abram and the Land – Typifying the Exodus**

Let's look at the passage. There are five scenes in this story. 1. Abram journeys from the land of Egypt to Bethel (**vv. 1-4**). 2. A dispute between Abram and Lot because of the land (**5-7**). 3. Abram's solution of land is proposed (**8-9**). 4. Lot makes a choice of which land he wants (**10-13**). 5. The covenant grant is expanded to a specific land, and Abram settles down outside of Haran (**14-18**). What all of them have in common is not "**how to make a good life decision,**" but **land**. Land is the issue here in this passage. Abram journeys out of the land of Egypt. He settles down in the wilderness where there is not enough land. He offers Lot a bunch of land. Lot takes a very specific land. God promises Abram the land. Those are the five divisions of the chapter.

But why would God be so concerned about this topic that he would spend an entire chapter of his very limited special revelation to talk about this and tell us about it? What do you think he's after? What do you think Moses is after in telling

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<sup>1</sup> John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 424.

this story in this way to us? Those are the things we ought to be concerned about here, because this is what they are concerned about. And if they are concerned about it, they you had better believe that it is for *your* benefit. You see, they know better than you what you need when you are sick. So let's try to discover that that is.

*The First Exodus and Renewed Worship (1-4)*

First, notice that it says, “Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb” (Gen 13:1). Why was he in Egypt? Remember, he had come to be there of his own stupidity. He was caught in a lie. While there, Pharaoh had given him much riches. But God sent plagues upon Pharaoh, to prove his sovereign power, and when the king figured out what was going on, he sent Abram and everything he had packing out of Egypt. This is all very much like what happened to Israel during the Exodus (see chart below).

The Exodus theme continues in Ch. 13. Abram had been living in the Negeb, and now he returns to it. As we saw last time, the Negeb is the desert or wilderness, so we could rephrase it to say, “Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and many things, and they went into the wilderness. He was very rich in silver and gold.” Consider this in light of Exodus 12:25-36, “Now the sons of Israel ... had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing ... They plundered the Egyptians.”

Exodus Typology in Genesis 13			
Genesis and Abram		Exodus and Moses	
Gen 12:17 <b>PLAGUES</b>	But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.	Ex 9:13-14	'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let my people go, that they may serve me. For this time I will send all my plagues on you [Pharaoh], and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.
Gen 12:18-19 <b>GO</b>	So Pharaoh called Abram and said, ... "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."	Ex 12:30-31	And Pharaoh rose up in the night ... Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, "Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said.
Gen 13:1 <b>OUT OF EGYPT</b>	So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had.	Ex 12:51	The LORD brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt by their regiments.
Gen 13:1 <b>WILDERNESS</b>	... into the Negeb [wilderness].	Ex 13:18	God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea.
Gen 12:16; 13:2 <b>WEALTH</b>	And for her sake [Pharaoh] dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels. ... Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.	Ex 12:35-36	The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.
Gen 13:3-4 <b>WORSHIP</b>	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, to the place where he had made an altar at the first. And there Abram called upon the name of the LORD.	Ex 8:27	We must go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as he tells us."

You see, from the very beginning of this story, there is something much bigger than Abram going on here. This is about **God doing something with Abram by his sovereignty**, something that will become known the world over because of the incredible events in the days of Moses. Thus, one of the things we are to look at for application is this: God's sovereign plan in history. He is the God who works things out to his will, for his purposes, in such a way that we can see it easily. And therefore, we are to trust him with our own lives.

We can ask a question at this point. **Why is the text so concerned with typifying the Exodus?** Why did God work in Abram's life in ways that will be so closely followed 400 years later? The answer is -- the rest of our story. First we see that God is letting Abram "go" as an act of his **loving-kindness and mercy**. In response, Abram moves beyond the wilderness and travels back up to Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai. He is now squarely in the land of Canaan again.

But the place is significant now as it will be later on in Genesis. Bethel is the "**House of El**" or House of God. What is the house of God but a holy place, a sanctuary, a **temple**? "**I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you**" (**Ps 5:7**). What does Abram do when he gets there? He goes to the place where he had made an altar at the first (**Gen 13:4**). And there Abram called upon the name of the LORD. Abram is now returning to the LORD after having abandoned Him when he went into Egypt.

This is also interesting to read in light of the Moses story. Moses was told to go to Pharaoh and say, "**Please let us go a three day's journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God**" (**Ex 3:18**). The Exodus climaxes at the foot of **Mt. Sinai**, God's sanctuary, in the middle of the barren **wasteland**, where Israel will consecrate herself in preparation to worship the God who has come to the mountain where he will enter into covenant with Israel and take her for his bride. Abram has gone to the little mountain of rocks that he has built in order to worship the God who has just set him and his bride free from Egypt.

Like Moses, Abram's response is the only rational response. Have you ever considered that the worship you are attending to at just this moment is a rational thing, yes the most rational thing in all the world? Some people think of worship is wholly irrational. Who would pray to an invisible person they cannot see and that does not exist? But if God has saved you, delivered you out of the kingdom of darkness through Jesus Christ his Son, if the Holy Spirit has taken hold of your heart, pouring new life into its once dead, lifeless shell, then what other response

could you have, knowing that today is weekly celebration of Christ's victory over the grave?

Let me point out again that it is the **Name of the LORD** that Abram called upon. In doing so, he is asking for God to come and meet him. But this God is the Name of God, not only the covenantal name Yahweh, but the One who embodies the Name—The Lord Jesus. Whenever you see this “Name of the LORD,” your thought should be of his deliverance. If you know him, you have personally witnessed the same deliverance, but in the spiritual realm, that Abram had been given in the physical. You know the power of God. You've seen the faithfulness of God, even while you are sinful. And so **worship** is the natural and proper response to One so powerful and yet so kind as to do this for you.

### *God's Blessing Creates Problems (5-7)*

It is important to notice again that Abram is no longer in the wilderness. Bethel and Ai are the high country north of Jerusalem. There is much more water here. Don't get me wrong. It isn't a rainforest or anything, but the land can sustain flocks and herds of livestock. Thus, when we read the next verses, we can really see how Abram's worship was indeed answered. **The blessing** God had promised to one man who was now rich with gold and silver, is **spilling over** to the rest of his family. And this is how the blessing of God usually works. For not only those who are directly and personally promised the blessing of God, but others not necessarily called by God also benefit. This blessing can extend even to an entire nation.

But when people or nations who do not know the LORD are abundantly blessed by the LORD as a byproduct of his special grace towards the elect, those peoples will not respond appropriately in worship or anything else that pleases God. They will gladly reap the bounty, even while denying the Giver of Good Gifts. **Enter Lot.**

Lot is the nephew of Abram, the son of Abram's brother Haran, who had died in Ur of Babylon (**Gen 11:27-28**). Now, I'm not saying that Lot was an unbeliever. Peter calls him “**righteous Lot**” (**2 Pet 2:7**). I am saying that Lot was not the son of the promise, and his descendants end up becoming godless Moab and Ammon. What comes now is the first of **three Lot Cycles**. “**Lot**” means a “**covering; veil**.” His name means “**concealed**.” What we find in this first story is that his name fits, for **what kind of a man is Lot, really?** It is very difficult to tell from this story, even as it was difficult to interpret Abram's actions in the previous one (and perhaps even here too).

As someone has pointed out, **vs. 5**, “Paradoxically, it is the blessing of God on Abram and Lot that creates the problem.”<sup>2</sup> Lot, who is no small child, but actually has daughters of his own, has gained his own wealth of flocks and herds and tents (**Gen 13:5**). But the land they were on could not support both of them dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they could not live together (6). Oh how ironic it is what happens between men when they both have *too much stuff*!

“And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock” (7). “Strife” is a word that can mean anything from quarrelling to lawsuits. The point is, relations are becoming strained because life is so ... good! Has that ever happened to you? Of course it has. You live in America. What else is there to do in a country where you have everything, need nothing, and are bored stilly with yourself? You look for meaningless things to fight over.

Well, this was a little more than that. In order to keep gaining more and more stuff, accumulating more wealth, more flocks, more money, someone is going to have to go. Also notice that it begins not with Abram and Lot themselves, but with their workers. These are the men on the docks, the managers of the masses. They see, day to day, how working conditions are deteriorating, how the animals are starving, how the men are becoming disgruntled. So they go to their bosses.

Yet, there is something else here before Abram and Lot get involved personally. There is this little parenthetical, “At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land” (7). Listen to the targum of this verse, “The shepherds of Abram restrained their beasts until the time of their coming to the place of their pasture; but the shepherds of Lot did not restrain their beasts, but turned them free, and went. But Abram's shepherds had been instructed by Abram their righteous master, Go not to the Kenaanaee [Canaanites] and Pherizaeae [Perizzites]; for as yet they have possession in the land” (**Gen 13:7** JTE). This oral tradition does *two things*. It reminds us that Abram and Lot are not alone. There are true enemies sitting right in their midst, watching how these two will handle themselves. I can’t help but think of us as Christians today, when we fight and quarrel among ourselves right in the midst of a watching world. What kind of a message does this send? I think you know the answer.

Second, it tells us that Lot was not handling things well at all, but suggests that Abram was *now living a life of faith*. Now, this is only a tradition, and it could be wrong, but it does seem to fit what we find here with Lot, and probably also what we find with Abram. So let’s turn to see how they handle the matter.

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<sup>2</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 296.

## *A Modest Proposal?* (8-9)

First, we see that **Abram is not a fan of the strife** that has arisen. He goes to Lot and tell him, “**Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen**” (**Gen 13:8**). Was Lot in agreement? Was Lot actually doing something to provoke this as the targum suggests? Whatever the case, Abram is clearly trying to be a **peacemaker**. Is it a coincidence this particular peacemaker has become God’s son (**Matt 5:9**) and will one day inherit the earth (**Rom 4:13**)? Are we seeing something now of Abram’s character, that he was not willingly a man of war, but strove in sometimes good (here), sometimes bad (Sarai in Egypt, Sarai and Hagar) ways to maintain the peace?

Yet, notice also that in order to maintain the peace, Abram also comes up with a concrete solution. “**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**” (**Gen 13:9**). There are a few things to think about here.

First, practically speaking, Abram knows that if they stay together, it will be **unbearable for both of them**. I can’t help but think of **Paul and Barnabas**, both Christians, yet men who saw things very differently and thus ended up splitting after a very successful ministry together. Later we learn that Paul was probably the one in the wrong, for he thought badly of young John Mark, whom Barnabas trusted even after Mark apparently abandoned them at one point. I view both of these situations, even as I view things that have happened around me, as tragic. Yet, sometimes, usually **because of the sin** of one or both parties, it is best to separate, and pray that time will help cool things down a bit. Paul eventually took Mark in, though we do not know what happened between him and Barnabas. But we should always want to **be reconciled as far as we are concerned**, even if that is not possible, for it keeps our hearts from growing hard and cold against others. We will see this in the next chapter with Abram.

Almost all commentaries view what Abram does here as **a selfless act of faith**, much like when he took Isaac up to the mountain to sacrifice him to the LORD. What is he doing? He is offering the Promised Land, or at least some of it, to Lot. I suspect that they are right, though I am not entirely certain. He is, after all, offering land to Lot that was never promised to Lot. This has caused some to think that maybe, because he is already so old, that **Abram viewed Lot as the heir** of the promise, the Seed that God would bless. Both he and Sarah were super old at this point. Surely, those thoughts had to creep in at least a little by this point. This is a



fascinating idea, and if so, the Lot stories would really be about proving to Abram that Lot is not, in fact, going to be that Seed.<sup>3</sup>

### *Lot's Choice (10-13)*

This leads us to Lot's answer. He agrees with his uncle and realizes that they must part ways. But where will Lot go? He has first dibs. "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 ... Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east ... Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom." (Gen 13:10, 11, 12). Now, as I've said, Peter does tell us that Lot was a righteous man. On the other hand, as we've seen, many sermons go to town here on just how unrighteous Lot seems to be here. So what are we to make of this?

First, let's not be hasty. When the word "Sodom" comes up, our knee jerk reaction is to demonize Lot. But Peter didn't do that, did he? In reading this story for the first time, we don't know anything about Sodom yet. Yes, we learn even here that God destroyed it (10). We learn that the men of Sodom were very wicked and great sinners against the LORD (13), but does Lot know this? Certainly not yet. As Walton says, "It is true that he will become tangled in Sodom's web, but there is no indication that anything but consideration of the advantages for his livelihood dictate his choices."<sup>4</sup>

The problem is more basic than that. It may very well have started with Lot's character as revealed in the targum, for we all have our own character flaws. But even if it did not, we do learn some very specific things here. First, Lot "lifted up his eyes." Later in this chapter, Abram will also lift up his eyes. What they see is very different. What does Lot see? He does not see his redemption drawing nigh, that's for sure. He does not see with the eyes of faith. Rather, he sees the physical beauty of the land. And he wants it for himself.

As they are standing on a high hill, overlooking the Jordan Valley, the comparison is made to the Garden of Eden. "That looks like the Garden of Eden. I think I'll go there." But the Garden of Eden had been put off limits, hadn't it? Then it is compared to Egypt. "That looks like Egypt. Oh, I remember the leeks and melons. I want to go there." And so, the Exodus foreshadowing continues. In this I am also reminded of Moses as the opposite of the people, this time through the eyes

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<sup>3</sup> I have wondered in the past if Abram isn't actually giving up his own right to the Promised Land, and if this may not actually be a sin. I have since retreated from that position somewhat for two reasons. 1. Abram does not appear to be offering Lot the entire land. 2. Both he and Lot will still be in the Promised Land. Abram is not saying, for instance, that he will return to Egypt.

<sup>4</sup> John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 424.

of the writer of Hebrews. “[Moses] considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward” (Heb 11:26). This is the difference between faith and sight. Sight sees what is here now. Faith looks ahead. Sight sees the physical beauty. Faith sees the lasting beauty. Sight is actually looking inward, to its own desires and appetites. Faith looks outward, to something beyond itself, to the LORD Himself.

So Lot’s choice is guided by what he sees, what will be good for him, for his people, for his livestock. He chooses the Jordan Valley. Does he even consider his uncle? His uncle has just offered him the world. What does he do? He takes it! Have you ever broken a cookie in half, only to offer half to someone else, only it wasn’t exactly broken in half? One side was clearly much larger than the other? When you offered it, which one were you hoping they would take? That is looking by sight, not by faith. Which one did they take? That, too, is looking by sight, not by faith. It is not being sensitive to others, but only to one’s appetite. This is covetousness at the core, and it is the summary and root of all sins.

Does Lot stop to think about what his choice might actually mean? Does he not remember who lives in this land? Does he not know? Does he actually think he will have no problem gaining all this land for himself without a fight? No, because he only thinks about what he sees at the moment. Just here and now. Thus, he separates from Abram. “Separate” (*parad*) used for the division of the nations. This was it. The two would no longer be one. It was a kind of divorce from the family.

Soon, Lot will come to rue the day he ever went east. Did you notice that little word? Lot went east? He moves to the very boundary of the land (though we do not know that this is the boundary yet). Moving eastward, as we have seen in Genesis, is not a good idea. This is the direction Adam and Eve had to go as they were cast out of the Garden. This is the direction Cain went. This is the direction the people went at Babel. Going east in Genesis is moving away from the LORD.

Notice also that Lot settled among the cities. Cain built a city and settled down in it. The people of Babel built a city, and worshiped the Watchers rather than the LORD. God called Abram *out of* a city, and had him be a tent dweller. So Lot’s choice is ominous. It portends that Lot may just suffer a lot, having taken what he believes is the big straw, he gets the short lot. What will be Lot’s lot to come (I had to do it). He will find out soon enough, for the spiritual reality is that this is not the Garden of Eden, it is the badlands.

*Covenant Grant Renewed and Extended (14-18)*

Abram settles down too. But in contrast (for now) to Lot, he settles “In the land of Canaan” (Gen 13:12). Like the word Sodom, this word also causes us to react too quickly. Of course he did! That’s what God had promised him. He was

living by faith. *Was he? Maybe.* But if Lot would have chosen Canaan, would the Bible have said that Abram settled in Canaan too? Was Abram's offer really so great after all? Again, maybe. But one thing is clear. If you read carefully, you will notice that Canaan has never actually been offered to Abram. God hasn't actually specified that this was to be the Promised Land. That is what the rest of the story now does.

God's graciousness in covenant is one of the most important graces you will ever hear about. Indeed, it roots the word in a promise that cannot be broken. And God is so gracious that he offers a covenant to us today, and even after believing it, when we sin, he returns again and again to this covenant in a form of covenant renewal. Each Lord's Day, we renew the covenant together, climaxing in the Covenant Renewal Meal—the new covenant in Christ's blood. Thus, God grants special grace, saving grace, sanctifying grace to his people on a regular basis.

Part of this grace is the reminder that God's covenant is for our benefit and well being. He has condescended to us in love and mercy and kindness. Abram may very well be dejected at this point, knowing that his nephew is gone, knowing that he is now stuck in a land full of vile enemies, with difficult terrain, and no certainty or specificity to that promise God had given him in Ch. 12, perhaps years ago by now.

Suddenly, the LORD spoke to Abram. *“Lift up your eyes” (Gen 13:14).* This expression now feels different. Lot's eyes were lifted in lust of the land. Abram's are lifted by God himself. His countenance rises. *“Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward.”* He must still have that fine view of the whole valley. Perhaps Lot is even still with him? Wouldn't that be something?

*“All the land that you see I will give to you and to your seed forever. I will make your seed as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your seed also can be counted” (15-16).*

*“The promise of the Seed? Noah? Eve? But now he knows for certain that it won't be Lot. But how?”*

*“Enough questions, Abram. That is enough for now. Just know that you will inherit this land. I will give it to you. I have sworn. Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land” (17).* Previously, Abram had walked the whole route north to south, perhaps not even knowing what he was doing. Now, the LORD says, go everywhere. Travel around. Take it in. Come to understand it. Come to know it. For I will give it to you and to your Seed. This is not only renewal of the covenant promise, it is specifying the very land that will be inherited. Surely, this made Abram's heart glad.

So Abram moved from that place and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron (18). He didn't go into Hebron. He stayed outside the city, under the trees. These trees and the one after whom they are named will be seen throughout Genesis. And oh, there is some strange stuff going on there. But for now, see how Abram reacts again to the promise of God.

“Abram built an altar to the LORD” (18). Again he worships. He worships publically. He worships in the midst of others, for all to see. And in this worship, a strange convergence comes in the NT. You already know that Christ is the ultimate Seed, as Paul tells us in Galatians. Christ inherits the land. This land will extend beyond these borders to encompass the whole world, and so Paul tells us also Abram's children will too (see Romans 4).

These children of Abram will become both biologically descended and spiritually descended from Abram, through the seed. The biology comes through the seed of Isaac. The spiritual come through the seed of Christ. He built an altar to the LORD outside the city. There is a curious verse in Hebrews 13:10 which says, “We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.” What altar is that? That altar is Christ himself, who offered his blood outside the city, in order to sanctify the people through his own blood (Heb 13:12).

And what application does it then make? “Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his Name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God” (13-16). May it be so with us.

Let us learn by the examples of these men, sure. But let us not leave it there at the level of moralism that so easily destroys our life for the living God. But let us draw our life from the one who is active in Abram's life, promising things to him, fulfilling them in his first coming, fulfilling them in his church even now, always at work, until the Father should send him back in his glorious Second Coming, when he will take his saints home, and will judge the living and the dead. May you find faith in him.