

A Call to Live by Faith, Not By Sight

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading is taken from Genesis chapter 13 verses 1 through 18. So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife, and all that he had, and lot with him into the Negev.

But Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. And he journeyed on from the Negev 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 first made an altar.

And there Abram came upon the name of the Lord. And lot who went with Abram also had flocks and herds and tents, so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together.

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.

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. Is not the whole land before you?

[1 : 27] 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.

And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zohar.

This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other.

Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley, and moved his tent as far as Sodom.

Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord. 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.

[2 : 35] For all the land that you see, I will give to you and your offspring forever. 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.

Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you. 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.

Good morning.

Good morning. Let us pray. O Lord, we need you, Lord.

Father, I particularly need you as I consider the passage that is before us. I pray, Lord, that you would grant me grace to speak or write what you would have me to say.

[4 : 01] Lord, I pray for those who will hear your message preached today. I pray, Lord, that you would enable them to hear from you through me.

Lord, help them not to confuse the person bringing the message with the message itself.

Help them to see beyond all of that and to see you in your word. Help, O Lord, your word to come alive in our hearts today and help it to accomplish, Lord, that which you have purposed it to do.

In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen. Today we are continuing our series in the book of Genesis.

And we have come to Genesis chapter 13. Genesis chapter 13. And perhaps you've noticed a topic in your bulletin, which is meekness of display.

[5 : 34] But that's not quite the topic that we have today. Our topic today instead is a call to live by faith and not by sight.

A call to live by faith, not by sight. I must admit that I struggled to come up with a summary for today's message.

The question that perplexed me was, where should we place the accent? On man's actions or God's providence?

As we consider these words in this chapter, should we place the accent on man's actions or on God's providence?

We know that ultimately the purposes of the Lord prevail. But how do we examine the scripture, Genesis chapter 13, considering that?

[6 : 50] The contrasting behaviors of Abram and Lot suggest that we emphasize man's actions.

Yet there is no doubt that the author of this book, Moses, seeks to convey with the use of symbolism, God's promises to Abram, and apparent unlikely events coming to pass, that the overarching theme is God's sovereignty and not man's actions.

In the end, though, it seems to me that the text is calling us to consider, it's calling us to consider today, how we ought to live, how we ought to walk in view of God's sovereignty, His design.

This chapter that we come to gives a contrast between two men existing, as we all do, within providential boundaries.

Therefore, an appropriate summary of this chapter might be, given the providential hand of the Lord, believers are called to live by faith and do not by sight.

[8 : 34] Given the providential hand of the Lord, you and I, believers, are called to live by faith and not by sight.

With that summary, we capture the actions of the key players, one who lives by faith, Abram, and the other who lives by sight, Lot, while ultimately drawing out the providential hand of the Lord in their lives.

Our two main points are, living by faith and living by sight. This account, as we said earlier, is rich in symbolism.

And it really doesn't allow us, this chapter really doesn't allow us to neatly place one section, one of these two sections that we are going to consider broadly.

And, if we were to, you know, it's not, it's not a, an easy read, if you will. We can't look at Genesis chapter 13 and say, well, this, these verses we're going to place under this particular heading and this particular section we'll place under the other.

[10 : 07] It's not that easy to do that. Besides, I really think that this is such a beautiful account. There is so much to draw from it, but I thought we ought to deviate a little slightly from what we would normally do.

I thought it would help if we were to retell this story. Retell the story as told to us by Moses.

And as we do, I thought we could see easily aspects of these two gentlemen being played out in this account.

And so we've got to deal with the two points together. That's my point. We've got to deal with living by faith and living by sight together.

And to help us further, I thought we ought to look at the chapter under seven subheadings.

[11 : 19] And so in a few short moments, we're going to look at the following seven subheadings. Number one, imperfection is not a disqualifier.

Number two, worship as a bookend of life. Number three, common cause for disagreements. number four, humility and faith exemplified.

Number five, selfishness and sight exemplified. Number six, attributes of the destinations. And finally, ultimate purpose of the Lord fulfilled.

Let's now examine the very first of these points. Imperfection is not a disqualifier.

We first encounter Abram in Genesis chapter 11 where we learn that his father took him and his younger brother's son, Lot, away from their home.

[12 : 47] So Lot, as you will recall, was Abram's nephew, the son of Abram's youngest brother.

Following the death of Abram's father, the Lord directed Abram to leave his family and to go to Canaan.

That was a clear instruction that the Lord gave him. Abram did not do as the Lord commanded.

First, he took Lot with him. Remember, the Lord had said to him, leave your family. but he took Lot with him and he went to Egypt.

And you'll recall last week how it was told to us that Abram deceived Pharaoh.

[13 : 54] Abram had been told, as recounted in Genesis chapter 11, that those who bless him will be blessed and those who curse him will be cursed.

And not being mindful of these words from the Lord, Moses still chose to live a lie.

we should not gloss over the fact that Abram whom Paul, the apostle Paul, included in the faith hall of fame, was not perfect by any means.

Moreover, it is interesting that Moses is relying on the account of Abram but does not seek to whitewash history.

That's quite interesting. Moses could have just included in the passage of scripture those accounts that would make Abram look like a perfect man.

[15 : 15] But he chose not to do that under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And we should not just slide by that fact is what I'm saying.

We should gain, you and I should gain comfort from the fact that just as Abram's imperfections did not disqualify him, the Lord will not disqualify us for our imperfections either.

We saw in the prior chapter Abram's failing, his lack of reliance on God. In this chapter, in the chapter we come to, we see the exact opposite.

What a man of contrast. And sometimes regrettably, that's exactly who we are. Men and women of contrast.

I think it is a good thing that we see this about Abram because it helps us to understand that we need not live, indeed we cannot live perfect lives.

[16 : 41] Yes, we ought to pursue perfection. But we must accept that we'll never achieve it. More importantly, when we fail as we will, we must know that God does not abandon us.

Moses, the author of this book, wants us to see that God's promise to Abram is based not on Abram himself, but based on the sovereignty of God.

He also wants us to see that God's promise to Abram is being fulfilled despite Abram's shortcomings!

and what circumstances appeared to be on the surface. God's promises are fulfilled despite human shortcomings, despite our shortcomings, and even when circumstances suggest otherwise.

Yes, we can put the accent of life's events on our actions, but ultimately it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.

[18 : 08] Perhaps you are now in a place of disobedience or a place of disappointment. Well, if that's true, this message is especially for you.

And if you're not there now, chances are 10 out of 10, that one day you're going to be there. Let's move now to point number two, worship as a bookend of life.

When we look at this chapter, it's quite interesting how Moses paints this picture. Moses begins with these words.

So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and locked with him into the Negev. Now, Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold, and he joined on from Negev 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 first, and there Abram called upon the name of the Lord. This is how Moses began this part of the account. This is how he began to tell the story of Abram's return.

[19 : 47] he begins it with this bookend of worship, if you will. And then if you go to verse 18 of the same chapter, he ends it in a similar way.

That Moses had built this altar to the Lord. it's as if Moses is painting a picture for us that between these events of Abram rests his worship of the Lord.

Abram departs from Egypt and then he goes to Bethel where he calls upon the name of the Lord. Then he closes in verse 18 with the same thing.

Builds an altar to the Lord. And in between we see these events. It is as if Moses wanted us to see that what was sandwiched between those references Bethel.

The Bethel was a period of Abram's faith, his reliance on God. That is how our lives should be. Lived within the bookends of worship.

[21 : 31] Scripture tells us that Abram called upon the name of the Lord at Bethel. See, praise the Lord.

Now here it is. We see in these opening verses that the Bible tells us that Abram was rich in livestock.

And so you say, here's a man who by most accounts did not need anything. He had no physical needs. he was rich, but he called upon the name of the Lord.

And the Bible doesn't tell us what he was saying. What did he say? It just says that he called upon the name of the Lord. But I can just imagine, I can just imagine that he must have been saying, Lord, help me.

I am insufficient despite what I have. I need your help. I can just imagine that as he was worshipping, he was saying to the Lord, Lord, I am undone.

[22 : 47] I am a sinner and you are holy. And he sees and he gets a sense of this all-powerful and holy God.

To hope he worships and he just sees himself as a little fry, a little fly, a little insect, as it were. The worshipper does not have an arrogant spirit.

He has a dependent spirit, a dependent heart. He knows that he understands his place. And so Moses, having left Egypt, where he committed the sin of basically giving his wife away, he now comes to a place where he lifts up holy hands before the Lord and he declares, Lord, I need you. He calls out to the Lord. He cries out to the Lord. Lord, but you got to see this.

When Abram, when Moses opens this chapter, there was no apparent reason, there was no apparent reason, humanly speaking, why Abram worshipped the Lord.

[24 : 23] This is what I'm saying to you. I'm saying that Abram was not motivated to worship the Lord because he had a need.

He didn't come, a physical need, I mean. He didn't come to the Lord saying, Lord, someone is trying to take my life.

Or Lord, the creditors are knocking at my door. Or Lord, my body is sick. The Bible says he just called out to the Lord.

No trouble was foreseeable in his path. And he had, and the other thing too, he didn't, by this account, he hadn't received any special blessing either.

So he just praised the Lord, because this was habit for him. This was something that he did. Evidently, Abram was a praiser.

[25 : 33] The words of the song come to mind. Come thou fount of every blessing. Tune my heart to sing your praise.

praise. And what if that were true for us? That the Lord would tune our hearts to sing his praise. Streams of mercy never ceasing call for some songs of loudest praise.

The song helps us to see that whatever we have, the song specifically says, here I raise my Ebenezer here by thy great help I have come and I hope by thy good pleasure safely to arrive home.

What's the point that I'm making here? The point I'm making here is this, that when you and I come to praise the Lord, when you and I come to worship the Lord, we do so because we know that everything that we are, everything that we have is because of the Lord.

In verse 18, Moses makes plain that Abram built an altar to the Lord, suggesting that it was not a one-time event.

[27 : 15] But here, contrasting Abram, this man of faith, this worshiper who looked to God, contrasting him with Lot, Moses makes no reference to Lot's worship, not at all.

After concluding that Abram was a worshiper, he first mentioned Lot in verse 5, and says only of him, Lot also had flock and herds.

Now, you've got to see this. Here it is, in all of these verses, Moses writes of Abram that he was rich, that he was a worshiper.

and then of Lot, he says only Lot also had flock and herds. You know, you don't want to be the other person when compliments are being given out.

Let me give you an example. Let me tell you what I mean. Suppose you and your sister, Sally, are being introduced by your mom, and your mom says of Sally, Sally, Sally has done this and Sally has done that and Sally's been, she's gone all around the world and she's such a sweet child.

[28 : 45] And then she comes to you and she says, she's my daughter, she's my second child. And that's it. And she says nothing else. But that helps to put things in perspective.

That tells you what she thinks of Sally and what she thinks of you. And that's exactly what Moses did here about law.

Would it not be sad if we journey through life on the only good thing someone says about us is he had great wealth.

Moses continues in this account verse 5 through 7 talks about this disagreement that these two men had.

It is interesting to observe that they got along quite well while they didn't have much. You know, when they had very little, there was no issue at all. But suddenly now they've got a great deal. [29 : 58] you know, Abram got a lot and Lot got a lot. And now there's friction between them.

So perhaps you might think that the accumulation of things caused all your trouble to go away. But this is evidence that that's not the case.

The scripture tells us that they that together they outgrew the space that they occupied. And as a consequence their livestock got in the way of each other.

I can just see that happening. Perhaps it was hard to distinguish one from the other. family matters getting in the way of each other.

Moses goes on in this account to share with us how Abram responds to this conflict.

[31 : 13] And in doing so he helps us to see humility and faith exemplify. Abram had clout over his nephew.

Abram was the older of the two. He was senior to his nephew. Much older I would imagine.

And he was wealthier he was the one remember who invited Lot to join him. And therefore it seems to me that it would have been reasonable for Abram to dictate to Lot.

It seemed to me that most of us if it were me I probably would have said to Lot not look Lot there is not going to be any fighting over here.

Now you better go and take your animals over there. Take your animals elsewhere. But that's not what Abram did.

[32 : 32] Instead in humility and in faith he said to Lot let there be no fight between us. Let's go our separate ways.

And then here is the kicker. Abram said to Lot you choose where you want to go and I will go in the opposite direction.

You hear that? Here is a man with all this clout all this wealth he speaks to his nephew he looks down physically at his nephew and says little boy you choose where you ought to go and I'll go in the opposite direction.

What humility! What faith! And here is this worshiper now. I want you to understand that he hadn't forgotten the promise that the Lord had made to him.

The promise of land and the promise that the Lord would give him generations of children. that could not be numbered.

[33 : 40] He hadn't forgotten it. But there was something going on with this man. He chose to believe that no matter what lot decided that the Lord was going to do what he said he would do.

What gave Abram the confidence that things would work out for him in the end? he knew God's promise to give him land and to make his generation great would come to pass.

It did not matter what happened. Abram knew that God's providential design would be fulfilled.

Having had a history of worship he said it would be okay.

Abram knew God. What an example of faith for us. What an example of faith for us.

Abram knew that this comes from the Lord. The Lord was on his side.

[34 : 54] He knew that that's where it came from. The Lord was on his side. He was prepared to face the consequences while genuflecting to one who was humanly speaking not on his level.

I would say that Abram had what we might call in the Bahamas a come what may attitude. See because Abram didn't know whether Lot would choose the east, the west, the north, or the south. But Abram said come what may. I know that the Lord's promises to me will come to pass. Come what may, I will serve the Lord.

Come what may, I would rather give honor to the Lord than render evil for evil. Come what may, I will bow out gracefully.

Come what may, I will be obedient. Can I tell you that that's what we are called to do as believers. We are called to be just like that.

[36 : 06] To have that attitude of come what may, come what may, I will lift up the name of the Lord. Come what may, I'd rather take last than to dishonor him.

Come what may, I'll stay on the pathway of righteousness. In our relationships, in our finances, at our jobs, in our businesses, and in all of our lives, we need to adapt a come what may attitude like Moses, like Abram did.

And then we see the example of selfishness, sight, living by sight in life.

Moses tells us in verses 10 and 11, you know that while Abram's humility and faith were exemplary, something to live by, we see the exact opposite for life.

You know, here's this little guy again, perhaps stronger than Abram, younger, rather than saying to his uncle who had done so much for him, rather than saying, no, uncle, you choose because you're older.

[37 : 39] And not only that, you've got much more than I do. In fact, uncle, maybe you ought to consider staying right here and I'm going to go over there. Rather than doing that, the Bible tells us that he started looking.

He started looking. Moving by faith. We should read carefully what Moses writes about Lot in these verses.

Moses says of him that he lifted up his eyes. He didn't lift up his heart to the Lord. He lifted up his eyes and he saw. It's reasonable to assume that both Lot and Abram knew the surrounding areas quite well.

It's interesting. Lot knew that area quite well. Lot looked and he saw the water running through the land but he never looked up to God.

Lot looked and he saw the presence of water but he had no regard for the sin infested place of Sodom.

[39 : 10] Lot is walking and living by sight. And you know when one considers Genesis chapter 11 and verse 3 one wonders whether Lot missed an opportunity here.

Because in these verses in Genesis chapter 11 and verse 3 if you take a look at it the Bible tells us Genesis chapter 12 sorry and verse 3 the Bible tells us that the Lord said to Moses the Lord said to Abram I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

One wonders whether Lot had an opportunity to be a blessing to Abram in that instance and he missed it he missed it.

But I want to talk now about the destinations of these men. Lot chose based on sight an area near Sodom.

Let's talk first about the place that Lot saw and moved to. On its face it featured everything that a herdsman would need it lush grass trees and abundance of water and smooth surfaces.

[41 : 15] That's what Lot saw. That's what Lot saw with his natural eyes. What he did not see was what was to come.

The gross sin of the place and how it would so overwhelm him and cause him to suffer significant loss.

There are things that the eyes cannot see is the point. Moses wants us to see that this is how Lot was living.

Lot was determined to be driven by what he was able to see. Meanwhile, Moses settled in Canaan where there was no river.

He needed rain for Abram to survive. And this is what Moses writes about this place where Abram settled in Deuteronomy chapter 11 and verse 10.

[42 : 37] 10 through 12. This is what he writes about that place. He says, for the land that you are entering, this is as the Israelites were returning to take possession of it.

He writes to them, for the land that you are entering to take possession of, it is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it like a garden of vegetables.

But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills, valleys, which drink, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land that the Lord your God cares for.

then he says in the last verse of number 11, the last sentence of verse 11, the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

So this land that Moses is directed to differs from the land that Lot went to.

[44 : 06] Lot's land had rivers running through it. Abram's land depended on the rain. about Abram's decision. About Abram's decision, Paul writes in Hebrews chapter 11, by faith Abram obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive 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 with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God. What is the point?

The point is that Abram was dependent entirely on God. He decided to cast his hand with the Lord, if you will.

He decided to be obedient to the Lord. And I'm saying to us, I'm saying to us that that's the kind of attitude that you and I need to have.

[45 : 23] That we ought to as believers, we ought to say, yeah, you know what, yeah, the pastors, they do look greener on the other side.

I do see people thriving on the other side. but you know what, I don't know that the Lord has called me to that. And I really don't know what those people over there are really going through.

So let me just wait on the Lord. Let me put this to the Lord and see what he says. let's live within the providential boundaries of the Lord.

Verses 14 through 15, we see the ultimate purpose of the Lord being fulfilled. Abram, remember, in chapter 12, the Lord told Abram, he says, leave your family behind.

Guess what? Bush crack, Lord, gone. Gone. The Lord is gone. Abram is family.

[46 : 43] Abram is by himself, no family now. He ends up without family. He's not family. not only that, not only that, he now ends up in the place where God has commanded him to go.

Ultimately though, it took a dispute between Abram and his nephew to lead him to where the Lord wished him to go.

How many of you know that sometimes in life that is what happens? Our disappointments lead to places of destiny.

The key point though is that God is in control, not man. That's something to give him praise about. He, not man, man is not in control. Aren't you glad today that man is not in control? Because if man was in control of your life, and what happened to you, could you imagine?

[48 : 01] Could you imagine? That's something to shout about. God, God, I am in this place right now.

But I'm not, it's not lost in you, Lord, where I am. I'm lost in the Lord where you and I are. No matter what it feels like, whether you're feeling good because your bank account looks like a million dollars, or whether you're feeling down because your body is afflicted.

The Lord knows what's going on with you. as we conclude this message, I am sure that without doubt, like me, you can tell story after story about things desired that may remain unfulfilled.

You can give accounts of times when you made decisions based on what you saw and what the Lord spoke to your heart about.

In fact, you made decisions without taking things to the Lord. And perhaps you are about to make a decision, such a decision, even now, even this day, or in the days to come.

[49 : 44] Or maybe like me, you are suffering what you believe are the consequences of bad decisions. Perhaps you are at a place where you wonder if God can use you or will forgive you for something you did or failed to do.

This account of Moses provides an unambiguous response to that question. He forgives the account of Abraham teaches us that no matter where you are in life, no matter the hardships you have endured, no matter what you think, no matter you cannot name the circumstance or the condition, this account helps us to see that God moves in a mysterious way.

That's how he moves. You and I don't always see it. The hymn writer says that he moves in a mysterious way and he performs wonders.

He performs wonders. Plants his footsteps in the seas. We don't see his footsteps. We don't often understand what he is doing.

He rides upon the storm, the storms of our lives, the challenges that we have. The minds that might be unsearchable.

[51 : 33] O East Saints, O brothers and sisters, don't be fearful.

Don't be fearful. Fresh courage take. The clouds that you must drag are big with mercy and will break.

blessings. Blessings on your hair. Then the hymn writer goes on to encourage us and he says to us, judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace.

Behind a frowning providence, he hides a smiling face. His purposes, they'll ripen fast. The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower, my brothers and my sisters.

Fresh courage take. the clouds that you now drag big with mercy and shall break in blessings on your head.

[53 : 12] The thread of scriptures is about God's timing.

This chapter that we read, it's about God's timing. It's about God's purposes. It's about God's will. And how many of you know that he looks at us as he looks at Abraham as his son and as his daughter?

So I want to tell you as we conclude to walk by faith, not by sight.

I want to tell you that if you are discouraged, consider what Abraham went through. Consider how he moved from chapter 12 to chapter 13.

consider that. Consider how he thought he would lose his life in chapter 12 and he was a devious man.

[54 : 25] Consider what he did to his beautiful wife. So can I tell you then, I want to tell you to hold on as I tell myself to hold on, to raise your head up and just keep on moving.

don't be like Lot who was driven by what he saw. Rather, be like Abram whose decisions flowed from his worship of God.

His decisions, that's what Moses is helping us to see. His decisions flowed from his worship of God. he sought to please God. He demonstrated that he did not know everything.

Aren't you glad today that you and I are at a place where we don't know anything and we can bow in humility before our God.

Lord, thank you for this. time and we looked into your word today. Oh, Lord, your word is rich and your word is sweet.

[55 : 50] Encourage our hearts, Lord. Encourage our hearts. Father, help us to see that we are so inadequate that we don't know our right hands from our left hands much less what tomorrow will bring.

Help us therefore, Lord, to look to you, your children. Help your children to look to you, Father.

Father, we pray, we lift up especially those who are going through very trying circumstances, Lord, and we know that there are some, some, Lord, who are struggling with family members, some who are struggling with finances, some who are struggling with health conditions, some who are struggling, oh, Lord, with sin, with disobedience.

Lord, help them to see that just as you did not abandon Abram, you will not abandon us, and Lord, you chose not to whitewash Abram's story.

Oh, Lord, thank you for that. Thank you that you presented before us this man who stands in the hall of faith, this imperfect man.

Oh, Lord, how grateful we are that you look to Jesus Christ for our perfection.

[57 : 48] and Lord, that's the merit, Lord, that we stand on today. We come to you for him and Lord, when we think about this truth that Abram did not have this reality, our hearts are gladdened even the more.

Oh, Father, infuse our hearts with these truths. I oppose, Lord, to be able to stand boldly before your throne of grace and mercy.

Oh, help us, Lord. Father, I pray in the coming days for each one present as we consider things that, decisions that we will be making.

I pray, Lord, that we will look to you. I pray that we will depend on you. I pray, Lord, that we will not consider only the things that are in our minds or the things that we see, but we will seek to hear from you.

In the name of Jesus, we pray and all God's people say amen. Amen.