

Family Feud

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Preacher: Jonathan Chancey

[0 : 00] Please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to Genesis chapter 12.! Genesis chapter 12 and our passage this morning will be the second half of Genesis chapter 12 starting in verse 10 and then all of chapter 13.

So when you found that in your Bibles Genesis 12 verse 10 all the way through the end of chapter 13. Let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word this morning. Now there was a famine in the land.

So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there for the famine was severe in the land. When he was about to enter Egypt he said to Sarai his wife, I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance.

And when the Egyptians see you they will say, this is his wife. Then they will kill me but they will let you live. 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.

When Abram entered Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

[1 : 16] And for her sake he dealt well with Abram. And he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys and camels. But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

So Pharaoh called Abram and said, what is this you've done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say she is my sister so that I took her for my wife? Now then here's your wife, take her, go.

And Pharaoh gave orders concerning him and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had. So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had and Lot with him into the Negev.

Now Abram was very rich in livestock and 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 made an altar at the first.

And there Abram called 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.

[2 : 27] 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? 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 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 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.

Then 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.

[3 : 46] 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. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever.

Father, we praise you for your word, and we pray now as we look to this account and see your faithfulness to your promises.

Lord, we ask that you would deepen our faith in you, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated. But you learn pretty quickly as a parent that you ought not make promises that you can't keep.

Or better yet, don't make promises that might in some way be threatened by something outside of your control. Because as you know, there are about a million ways that things can go off the rails, things can go wrong, and your promises might not be capped.

[4 : 58] For example, don't promise your kids that no matter what happens, you promise you will take them to the pool next Friday. Because of course, next Friday is a long way away, and something might go wrong.

Something might go wrong with you. You might get sick before next Friday. Something might happen. Some work comes up. Something else comes up. Some family emergency might happen.

Or if you're honest, you might just change your mind before Friday comes. You might not want to go to the pool anymore. So the issue might be within you, and you won't keep your promise. Or the issue might be something outside of you, something external, something beyond yourself.

So Friday comes, and it starts to rain. Friday comes, and the pool is closed. Friday comes, and you're on your way. Somebody else runs a red light and runs into your car.

There are all sorts of threats, both internal and external, to our promises coming to pass. But not so with God.

[6 : 04] God faces no such obstacles to His promises coming to pass. The good news of our passage this morning is that when God makes promises, no distraction, no enemy, no threat, whether internal or external, can keep Him from fulfilling His word.

Our God is faithful to fulfill every promise. No threat, internal or external, can ever nullify the promises of God. That's the big idea for us this morning in our passage.

We saw last week from Genesis chapter 12 that God has made some pretty incredible promises to Abram. But this morning, what we see is that as soon as God makes these promises, what happens?

We see threats to the promise. In fact, we see two threats here in our passage this morning. This will be our outline this morning. Two threats to the promise.

We see the first one here in the second half of chapter 12. First, we see a threat to the promised seed. A threat to the promised offspring. Look there to chapter 12, verse 10.

[7 : 19] We saw last week that Abram has come into Canaan. He's arrived in the promised land. But pretty quickly, we see things aren't so great here in the promised land, are they? Verse 10 says that there was famine in the land.

And apparently, it says the famine was severe in the land. So what does Abram do? He leaves the promised land and he comes down to the land of Egypt. And already here in just one verse, things have taken a pretty drastic shift, haven't they?

God has just called Abram and told him to go into the land of Canaan. He's just promised to give him this whole land. All this would be his. But here, automatically, right away, as soon as there's an issue, here he is leaving the promised land because quite literally, the grass is greener down in Egypt.

It's not a good start for Abram. And we see that once he gets there in Egypt, it doesn't go much better for him, does it? Look there, starting in verse 11. As Abram and his wife Sarai are about to enter Egypt, he has this bright idea.

Now, married women in the room, I want you to place yourself in Sarai's shoes for a minute. Tell me how this would go. Now, you have just moved to a new place with your husband.

[8 : 33] He said, we got to go. We got to move. You just move everything you have, everything you own to leave your father's house, to leave what's familiar to you, go into a brand new place.

And now he says, babe, it's time to move again. It's time to go. We need to go down into Egypt. And then he says, darling, you are so, so beautiful.

That's a good start, right? You are so beautiful that any man who lays his eyes on you would want you as his wife. It's pretty good.

He says, darling, you are so beautiful that when we get down to Egypt, I want you to tell everybody you're my sister. Now, we don't have Sarai's account of what happened here, but I can only imagine that she might say something like, why would I do that, Abram?

And he says, well, because if you tell them that you're my sister, maybe they'll let me live and they'll take good care of me and they'll give me all these blessings and so you go be with them so that it might go well with me.

[9 : 38] How would that go over for you ladies? This would be a threat, I would think, to any marriage, wouldn't it? But there's a bigger issue at stake here, isn't there?

Do you see what it is? This is a threat to God's promise. God promised to give Abram offspring and that would be difficult enough already considering Abram's age and considering Sarai's infertility, she is barren, but that would be absolutely impossible if as soon as they go to Egypt, Abram just gives his wife away.

We're left wondering, how will God fulfill his promise to Abram? Abram almost immediately because of his own sin, because of his own selfishness, he is a threat to the promise of God.

And to make matters worse, look there, starting in verse 14. To make matters worse, it seems like the plan is working, doesn't it? It seems like he was right. Verse 14 says, when Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful, he was right about that, and when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house, and for her sake, he dealt well with Abram, and he had sheep and oxen and male donkeys and male servants and female servants and female donkeys and camels, and by all accounts, it looks like his plan is working out just fine, doesn't it?

By all accounts, Abram is doing pretty well. He's getting away with it. His plan is resulting in prosperity. He's got all sorts of material blessings, sheep and oxen, donkeys and servants.

[11 : 24] He is prospering because of his lie. Abram deceives his way into blessing. He lies and he prospers and it seems like all is going great for Abram, doesn't it?

But do you think that that's how God desires to bless Abram? God promised to bless Abram, but do you think that this is how he desired to do it?

No, not at all. Psalm 37, verse 16, it tells us, better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of the wicked.

You hear that? Better is the little that the righteous has than all the abundance of the wicked. In other words, in God's accounting of things, in God's economy, righteousness and integrity and faith and blamelessness and holiness, Christ-likeness are worth more than all the material blessings in the world.

Sometimes I think that you and I can be tempted in the very same way that Abram is tempted here. We can be tempted to just maybe just tell a little white lie, just something a little bit short of the truth, just some alternative version of the whole truth in order that it might go well with us.

[12 : 50] That we might be blessed. I mean, what's wrong with that? We come out on the positive end of things. What's so wrong with just giving a little bit less than the truth? And so we might be tempted to just fudge the numbers just a little bit on our taxes.

Maybe just a little bit. That way we don't have to pay everything that we actually owe and we come out a little bit better on the end. What's wrong with that? Maybe we're tempted to deceive our boss and pretend like we're busy at work when we're really using that paid time to go take care of personal things, personal business.

That's so normal and we think, well, what's the big deal with that? The big deal is that God's people are called to be people of the truth and we aren't called to just chase blessing any way that we can get it.

We're called to be people of holiness and righteousness and blamelessness and to seek God's blessing in God's time in God's way even if we think we could just reach out and grab it ourselves if we just took a little shortcut.

We're called to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you. Maybe not now, maybe not how you desire. Abram here, the man of faith, he shows us very clearly that he too, like us, is a sinner.

[14 : 14] You know, it's amazing how similar this passage is to the fall in Genesis chapter 3. We just talked about this in our grow class this morning. The fall in Genesis chapter 3, Abram, like Adam before him, fails in his responsibility to love and to guard and to protect his wife.

But what I want you to see is that Abram's not just acting like Adam, Abram is acting like Satan. Now the language here is so similar to Genesis chapter 3.

Just think about it. Just as the enemy deceived Adam and Eve and they saw that the fruit was good and they took it and ate, here because of Abram's deception, the Egyptians see that Sarai looks good to the eyes and they take her into Pharaoh's house.

You see that pattern? See, good, take. See, good, take. This is in many ways another repeat of the fall, but did you notice Abram's place in all of it? Abram is standing in the place of the serpent himself.

He is the one deceiving the Egyptians. He's the one that's leading them to see and to take what was not rightfully theirs to take. What a tragedy. The one who is meant to be an agent of blessing to the world is right away because of his sin, he is multiplying curse instead of blessing.

[15 : 41] The one through whom the promised offspring is meant to come is threatening the promise right away because he's giving his wife away in exchange for blessing.

Look at what God does. Verse 17. God does not let Abram's sin stop his promise.

You see that? God does not let Abram's unfaithfulness nullify his faithfulness. Verse 17. God afflicts Pharaoh with plagues.

Now that ought to sound familiar too, doesn't it? Oh, this is sort of foreshadowing the events of the Exodus to come. You remember the Exodus. God's people are driven to Egypt because of famine.

They are taken into Pharaoh's property. The promises of God appear to be threatened, but God steps in. God afflicts the Egyptians with plagues. God intervenes.

[16 : 39] He brings his people out with all the blessings and the property of the Egyptians back to the land of promise. Well, this is exactly what happens here with Abram. And the point is, the point that would certainly comfort the Israelites in years to come, God will defend his promises.

God will not let Abram's faithlessness or foolishness derail or destroy his purposes.

God will not let Abram's sin or Abram's selfishness alter his plan in any way to bring about the promised offspring through him.

God acts to fulfill all his promises. That's true for the promised offspring. And second here we see is also true for the promised land.

Look there to chapter 13. The second threat that we see here is the threat to the promised land. Look there with me starting in verse 1 chapter 13. Chapter 13 tells us that after all of this, Abram left Egypt.

[17 : 51] He's kicked out of Egypt. Pharaoh says, you've got to get out of here. And through this whole ordeal, he comes out very rich, very wealthy. He has sheep and oxen and donkeys and servants, silver and gold and somehow still has his wife.

But starting in verse 2 we see that this abundance of wealth very quickly poses a problem for Abram. Look there to verse 2. Verse 2 says, Now Abram was very rich in livestock and silver and gold and he journeyed on from the Negev as far as Bethel to the place where he had his tent at the beginning between Bethel and Ai to the place where he made the altar at the first and there Abram called upon the name of the Lord.

And we hear in verse 5 that Lot also who went with Abram also had an abundance of material blessings, 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 couldn't dwell together and there's strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock.

The promised land has some problems here, doesn't it? For one thing, there's famine, and for another, it's just not big enough.

It's not big enough to host even two wealthy men, and the reason why we see it here is that it's still occupied by the Canaanites and the Perizzites. They're still dwelling in the land.

[19 : 20] The enemies are still there, and so the space that Abram and Lot can occupy is limited. There's simply not enough room for both of them. They're stepping on each other's toes. It's a problem.

You know how when you go on vacation with your family, extended family, and you have all of them in maybe like one big beach house, and you just are trying to get into the kitchen, trying to get what you need, trying to go to the bathroom, and there's only like two or three for 20 people?

It gets old real quick, doesn't it? You are stepping on each other's toes. The space simply isn't there. Look how Abram goes about it. Notice the contrast here between Abram and Lot.

Abram makes a move towards peace with his family. Chapter 13, verse 8, Abram says to Lot, let there be no strife between you and me, between your herdsmen and my herdsmen.

Why? For we are kinsmen. We're family. I don't want to fight with you. Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, I'll go to the right.

[20 : 24] If you take the right hand, I'll go to the left. Look out and take whatever you want. Abram gives Lot first pick. Now Bethel, where they are, that's about 2,800 feet above sea level.

And so Lot, he can truly look out on all the land as far as his eye can see. He can lay eyes on all of it and take his pick. And Abram, very generously I would say, he says, I don't want there to be trouble between us, so you just take a look, you get whatever you want.

Lot looks and it doesn't take him too long to make his decision, does it? Right away, verse 10, it says, he lifts his eyes and sees that the Jordan Valley looks good, it's well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like Egypt in fact.

And so what does Lot do? Look at this. Lot sees that it looks good and he takes for himself the Jordan Valley. Here we go again. Do you hear that pattern again?

See, good, take, see, good, take. That's a good indicator for us that something is not quite right with Lot's decision making here. He sees, it looks good, he takes.

[21 : 40] what's the issue? Ultimately, this is a contrast between Abram walking by faith and Lot walking by sight.

You think about it, what could motivate Abram to be so generous? What could motivate him to be so confident that he can open up all the land and tell Lot to just go take whatever you want?

Abram is acting like someone who trusts in God's promise to give him all the land, isn't he? And meanwhile, Lot is acting like someone who makes choices based on simply what appeals to the flesh.

Abram, he's showing us here that trust in God's promises ought to make God's people incredibly generous and open-handed with all of our worldly treasure.

You realize, church, God has promised us eternal riches in Christ beyond our wildest imagination for all eternity, all our needs met in Christ, and so therefore, we can be generous and open-handed in ways that simply don't make sense to the world's way of accounting for things.

[23 : 02] God has promised us forgiveness in Christ. He has reconciled us to himself in Christ. And so, God's people, we can humble ourselves and risk looking foolish in order to reconcile and make peace with others.

Christ has promised us there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold.

Now, in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life. if so, God's people can take risks that look foolish in the world's eyes.

Risks like moving to a dangerous place to take the gospel where it's not yet been heard. Risks like turning down extra hours at work on the weekends to prioritize gathering with God's people in worship.

Risks like risking relationships and risking rejection to share the gospel with our friends and our family and our neighbors and our co-workers. Why? Because like Abram, we are called to walk by faith and not by sight.

[24 : 17] Abram shows us what this looks like. Meanwhile, Lot shows us what it looks like to walk by sight. Did you notice the little editorial comments about the land that Lot chose?

It looks good, doesn't it? It looks beautiful. It's like the land of Eden. It's like Egypt. It's well watered. It's beautiful. But look at these little comments. All this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

Verse 13, the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord. As far as Lot's eyes could tell, this was clearly the best choice, but as we'll soon see, there are bigger issues to come for Lot.

Calvin, in light of this passage, he urges us, let us then learn by this example, that our eyes are not to be trusted, but that we must rather be on our guard, lest we be ensnared by them, and be encircled, unaware, with many evils, just as Lot, when he fancied that he was dwelling in paradise, was nearly plunged into the depths of hell.

Church, how often are our choices driven by sight, faith, and not by faith? How often are our decisions driven by what appeals to our senses, and not by the promises of God?

[25 : 46] Do we realize that in every single decision that we make, there is more to consider than simply what appeals to our flesh? There's application here all over the place, isn't there?

There's application for moving to a new place. Often people make moves based on jobs, they get a new, better job opportunity, leads them to a new place, they look up the place, they Google it, and they see all this beautiful landscape, all the fun things to do, all the areas to explore, all the good restaurants to eat at, and then somewhere all the way down the list, eventually, maybe, they might think about finding a church somewhere.

Can I suggest that that's completely backwards? It is infinitely better to be in a place that is physically famished, but spiritually well watered, than to be somewhere physically beautiful, but spiritually famished.

Apply this to dating. A few of you are maybe in that phase, and if you're not, maybe your kids or your grandkids will be soon. If there is anywhere in our culture that emphasizes sight, and feeling, and physical, appealing to the senses, this is it, isn't it?

And hear me say, attraction is good, chemistry, if you want to call it that, that's fine, that's good, but for a Christian, nothing is more important than making sure that you are spiritually united in Christ.

[27 : 19] I mean, how far down the list is that for you? as you date and evaluate the potential of a future with somebody, put this first, do they know the Lord?

Are they committed to walking with you in a Christ-honoring marriage? Do you share a common vision for the spiritual health of your home? Here we see another apparent threat to the promise of God.

The land is insufficient, it's famished, it's occupied by the enemy, it's causing problems for Abram's family and Lot chooses the most attractive portion and here is Abram left in a desert without any family and he's wondering will God fulfill his promise?

How will God fulfill the promises that he's made? Look down to verse 14. God speaks and he assures Abram once again, no threat, will overcome my promise.

The Lord said to Abram, after Lot 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.

[28 : 40] 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! Arise, walk through the length and 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. In other words, God says, Abram, no threat can cancel out my promise.

You may mess up a thousand times but I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth. Others may sin against you and be selfish and take what looks best to the naked eye but walk through the land I will give it to you.

No threat from within no threat from without can cancel out my promise when I speak and when I promise I will accomplish everything I say to you.

Certainly Abram would be assured and comforted by this but church now let me tell you why this is so good for us because this has everything to do with us in Christ God has made promises to us in Christ in fact we saw last week and we'll see over and over and over and over again throughout Abram's story we are the heirs of these promises by faith in Christ it is those who share the faith of Abraham who are children of Abraham and heirs of the promises Paul says in Galatians 3 so here again we have layers to these promises layers to these promises here in the Old Testament on one layer on one level yes we can look forward and see how God fulfills his promise to Abraham he gives him physical children

[30 : 42] Isaac and then through Isaac the whole nation of Israel those who are his offspring according to the flesh! and we can look forward and see how on one level God fulfills his promise to Israel and brings them into the promised land of Canaan but hear me that is not the whole picture that is temporary and partial there are greater promises at play here than just a physical offspring in just a small patch of dirt over in the Middle East these promises!

all God's promises are ultimately expanded and fulfilled and extended to us in such a way that no threat can ever remove them in Jesus Christ the promised son of Abraham who can number the church who can count the number of God's people throughout the ages all those who by faith have trusted in the promises of God they are more numerous than the sand on the shore more numerous than all the stars in the sky you know John saw this in revelation and he spoke about it he said there was a great multitude that no one could number from every nation from all tribes and peoples and languages!

standing before the throne and before the lamb clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out at the loud voice salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb this is your future if you are in Christ God promises to adopt you as a son as a daughter and to give you infinite eternal unshakable joy that spills over into praise and worship for the rest of eternity in a countless company of other redeemed sinners just like yourself from all nations of the earth by faith in Christ what a promise here's another God promises you all the earth as an inheritance in

Christ Canaan isn't big enough to host all this multitude Paul tells us in Romans 4 verse 13 he says the promise to Abraham and his offspring was that he would be heir of the world Canaan is too small our inheritance the promise made to Abraham received by faith in Christ is all the world the new heavens and the new earth a beautiful inheritance that Peter says is imperishable undefiled unfading kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time church look around as far as your eyes can see go outdoors and walk the land travel the world all of it is yours in

Christ does that not take your breath away God has promised you eternal life by faith in Christ God has promised you all the world renewed restored cleansed from sin beautified and glorified to be received in the age to come by faith in Christ God has promised to bless you and to keep you by faith in Christ God has promised to adopt you as sons and daughters by faith in Christ God has promised to forgive all your sin to remove it as far as the east is from the west by faith in Christ he has promised to love you and to be your God and for you to be his people by faith in Christ he has promised such incredible blessing for any sinner who trusts in

[35 : 24] Christ by faith and our confidence church is that no threat no threat in heaven or on earth no threat from within or from without can ever take these promises away he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how will he not also with him graciously!

give us all things! What's our assurance that all this will come to pass? It's not us it's not our own goodness it's not our own perfection goodness no we look to Christ and see the faithfulness of God displayed we look to Christ and see all of God's promises are fulfilled in him Christ Jesus came and lived and died and rose to secure for us his people by faith all the promises of God we look to Christ we rejoice that Christ is not like Abram who traded in his bride to save his own life that he might be blessed we rejoice that Christ Jesus gave his life to save his bride that we might be blessed in him you see how good this is sinner rejoice that your weakness cannot nullify

God's promises to you in Christ your failure cannot cancel God's promises to you in Christ your sin is insufficient to overpower God's grace given to you by faith in Christ if you are in Christ by faith here's our assurance God who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ no enemy can pluck you from his hand God will defend his promises those from within and those from without as Paul says in Romans chapter 8 I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of

God in Christ Jesus our Lord isn't this such good news what can we say to these things Christian when you lay your head on your pillow tonight your mind races with all of your failures all of your sins all of your troubles all of your shortcomings or maybe you think about all the stresses all the issues in your life worries over children worries over finances worries over health worries over life look to Jesus remember the faithfulness of God and rest in the confidence no sin from within no threat from without can render void his promises to you in

Christ father we praise you for your faithfulness we praise you for the truth that we just sang Lord when I fear my faith will fail Christ will hold me fast when the tempter would prevail Christ will hold me fast Lord we praise you that that your faithfulness is our hope and our confidence that every promise of God is fulfilled in Christ and how undeserving we are to receive them but we gratefully receive them by faith we love you Lord we pray this all in Jesus name Amen Amen Thank you.