Genesis 13

“The Journey Back: Restoring Faith and Vision”

INTRODUCTION

Turn with me in your Bibles to Galatians 3:6-9. Please stand in reverence of reading God’s Word.

*6 So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”*

*7 Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. 8 Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham:*

*“All nations will be blessed through you.”*

*9 So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (Galatians 3:6-9)*

Let us pray. May God add the blessings of understanding, conviction, and application to the reading of His Word. In Jesus Name I pray, Amen. You may be seated.

This morning, we continue our journey with Abram, whose name is later changed to Abraham. Last week, the journey described a failure. However, today, we will read about a course correction of faith. Henry Ford is quoted as saying

"Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently." – Henry Ford

This morning, you can begin again more intelligently. If you are drifting from God's best, making decisions out of fear, or living with the consequences of compromise, Genesis 13 is for you. Today, we’ll see how Abram begins again by going back to the altar, the place where he first met with God, and he chooses, once again, to trust in God’s promises. And God meets him with fresh vision and renewed direction.

So wherever you are this morning, whether you are wandering, conflicted, or seeking, God is calling you back to the altar, back to trust, and forward into His promises. So, let’s begin with Genesis 13, starting with verse one.

*1So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. 2 Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. 3 From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier. 4 and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the Lord.*

Ladies and gentlemen…

COME BACK TO THE ALTAR

In Genesis 12, Abram built an altar between Bethel, the house of God, on the west and Ai, the place of ruin, on the east. From there he went to the Negev, a desert region in the southern portion of God’s Promised Land. While in the Negev, a famine hit. Instead of returning to the place where he first called on the LORD when he was suffering, Abram called an audible and headed south, to Egypt. God provided, but Abram realized that fear, selfishness, and bad decisions are the results of leaving the promises of God.

And so, what does Abram do? He went back. Back through the Negev, and then back to the altar, situated high on a hill between Bethel and Ai. What a profound statement Abram made by returning to this altar. And He went with a purpose, to make a decision. Will I go west, toward the House of God, or east, toward the place of ruin? The East represented where Abram came from initially. So far in the scripture, going east always meant going away from the presence and the promises of God. But going West represented where God is going. And so this time, instead of relying on his wit and wisdom, He called on the name of the Lord.

APPLICATION

From the comments you shared with me last week, many of you resonated with the story of Abram. You are in a season where fear, selfishness and bad decisions rule instead of a lifestyle of faith. Like Abram, you’ve wandered into your own version of Egypt, a place that seemed like the practical answer but pulled you further from where God calls you to be. The beauty of Genesis 13 is that it reminds us we can go back to the altar, pray, and trust God once again. You and I can come to the altar of God and make a choice: will we go toward God’s presence, or will we drift toward ruin? This is the choice we must make over and over again.

Today, we as a church stand between Bethel and Ai, between surrender and self-reliance, between trust and fear. The call is to return. Return to the moment where we last called on God. And don’t go east. Go west young man!

Abram is back, walking around in the promises of God. He is back, calling on the LORD instead of compromising his family and his word. And he lived happily ever after, right?

Let’s keep reading in verse five.

*5 Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. 6 But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. 7 And quarreling arose between Abram’s herders and Lot’s. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.*

Ladies and gentlemen, let’s…

GET BACK TO THE CHALLENGES

Mo money, Mo problems, am I right? In the midst of God’s blessings a fight broke out. The supply of God brought about a demand for food. The shepherds of Abram and Lot can’t keep up with the need to feed and water their livestock. Jewish theologians consistently say that the problem was with Lot’s people, but the Bible is silent on this subject. But it explicitly says that their abundance created a problem.

Abram, as the leader of his family, must choose. Will he respond in fear, as he did in Egypt, or faith? Will he be selfish, as he was with Sarai, or selfless in his reaction to Lot? Will his choice be based on trust in God, or trust in what Abram sees?

APPLICATION

Isn’t it interesting how even when we’re walking in the promises of God, life doesn’t suddenly become easy? We still have conflict. We struggle with tension. We continue to face tough choices. Folks, never assume that obedience to God smooths out the rough edges of life. Faithfulness doesn’t eliminate challenges, it just shapes how we respond to them.

Abram once again was faced with one of those moments. Yes, his blessings increased, but so did the pressure. It’s just when our lives become fuller, like when our families grow, when our work responsibilities multiply, when relationships advance, the margin for peace seems to shrink. Quarreling starts. Relationships are tested. And we’re forced to choose. Will we react out of fear and selfishness, or respond with faith and trust in God?

Abram failed before, but this time he had a chance to lead differently. To show that trusting God meant choosing peace over pride and faith over fear.

Today, God asks us to take a breath and surrender our grip on being right and in control, and instead to trust Him enough to choose peace. Folks, even in conflict we can reflect the heart of God. No, being in God’s will doesn't mean avoiding problems. It means learning to face our challenges with faith.

And oh, by the way, the Canaanites and Perizzites were watching! These were the ones that eventually would be displaced from power in the Promised Land. The choice that Abram made not only would affect his family, but those that were around him. Sound familiar? Abram, the one who would be a blessing to the nations, was being watched by the nations. Would he glorify God with his choice or bring shame on His Name? Oh Christian, may we realize the bubble we live in as those who bear the name of Christ!

Verse eight.

*8 So Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Let’s part company. If you go to the left, I’ll go to the right; if you go to the right, I’ll go to the left.”*

*10 Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) 11 So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: 12 Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. 13 Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.*

Ladies and gentlemen, we need to…

RECOGNIZE THE CONTRAST IN OUR CHOICES

What a difference it makes when we call on the LORD! This is not the same Abram we saw at the end of chapter 12. No longer was he making decisions based on fear. No longer was he trying to save his own skin. His decisions reflect his trust in God’s promises. No matter where Abram was in this land, God would provide. And think about the impact this decision had on those around Abram. There was now peace with Lot and the rest of his family. And the Canaanites and Perizzites were wondering, “What just happened here? The Jordan Valley verses this land? I’d choose the Jordan Valley all day! No one stays here unless they know something, or someone, we don’t know.”

Now compare Abram’s decision with the decision of Lot. On its surface, Lot made the right decision. Lot, from the vantage point of this mountaintop, saw the Jordan Valley, a land compared to the Garden of Eden and to Egypt’s fertile country. It just made sense to head EAST, right?

The Lot in Genesis 13 sounds a lot like the Abram of Genesis 12, doesn’t he? He faced a challenge and made the decision that just looked good.

And those of us who are reading this now are screaming,

“Don’t go east Lot! You don’t know what awaits you in the Jordan Valley! It’s way too close to Sodom!”

So far in our story, we have not been formally introduced to Sodom. In the next few chapters, we will learn a great deal about this wicked place. Suffice it is to say at this point that Sodom was a “high crime area not suitable to families.” Even today, it is not a complement when cities are compared to Sodom. Or Gomorrah. But that’s a story for another day.

APPLICATION

Here’s the point. Faith doesn’t always choose what looks best. Faith chooses what honors God the most. Abram’s decision created peace, reflected maturity, and made a quiet but powerful statement to those watching him:

"I trust God to provide, no matter where I stand."

Lot’s decision, though practical on the surface, led him east; away from God’s promise and eventually toward the ruins of Sodom.

So let’s ask ourselves the following:

When faced with tough choices, do we seek what’s easy or what’s faithful?

Do we make decisions based on what we see, or on what God says?

The world will often pull us toward what looks lush and promising. But never forget, the grass is not always greener on the other side. Sometimes, the place of greatest blessing is the place that requires the greatest trust.

The Bible says that

*“Faith is the evidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”* (Hebrews 11:1)

Let’s be the people who choose like the Abram of Genesis 13. Let’s trust God more than trusting what we see."

Verse 14.

*14 The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. 15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. 16 I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. 17 Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.”*

*18 So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the Lord.*

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, we need to…

WALK IN GOD’S PROMISES

Compare the choices of Abram and Lot. Abram returned to the altar of God, called on the LORD, and by faith made a choice: I will trust God. Then Abram faced a challenge. And as the chosen representative of God, Abram now gives Lot a choice. In between Bethel, the House of God on the west; and Ai, the Land of Ruin toward the east, Lot looks up and chooses to go toward the land that looked like Egypt, close to the people of Sodom. And now Abram, for the first time on this journey is separated from his right hand man Lot. Yes, Abram was acting in faith. Yes, Abram de-escalated the tension in his family. But from a human perspective, Abram just gave away the farm. And now he is alone. Or is he?

As Lot and his caravan are walking away toward what seems to be the greener pastures, God spoke to Abram. And this time, with details. Remember the last time God spoke to Abram? It was in the beginning of CH 12.

*“Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.”* (Genesis 12:1)

Now, it was time for God to show Abram. Look up Abram! From this mountaintop, let your eyes go to the North, South, East, and West. I am now showing you the land to I have sent you. And you are going to have so many babies and grandbabies, Abram. From old Abram and Sarai I will make a nation. In this desolate land I will provide for your people. Now take a walk Abram, and go explore this gift I have given you.

And so what did Abram do? He took himself a walkabout. A walkabout is an Aboriginal term, when a man leaves his family and goes out into the bush into to spiritually connect with his culture and the land. In British terms, it is when a person of importance goes about and greets the common people.

Question: did Abram and his family officially own anything they saw on this walkabout? When they were walking around, were the Canaanites saying there goes the guy who owns everything we see? No, all Abram had was the vision that God gave Abram in that place of decision.

Abram’s walkabout led him south, to a place called Hebron. And he pitched himself a tent under the trees of Mamre. Hebron means communion. Mamre means vision. Essentially, Abram was saying “I am in communion with Almighty God, and I trust in the vision He gave me.”

APPLICATION

Folks, when we take that step of faith and follow Christ, there will be times when obedience to God makes no earthly sense. Like Abram, we will feel like we’ve given away the better option, or that you've lost something valuable by choosing walk with Christ. But faith doesn’t operate by what we can see. It operates by what God has said.

God’s promises are not always visible in the moment. Sometimes all we have is His Word and our next step. But just like Abram, when we choose to trust and obey, God meets us in the place of surrender with renewed vision, deeper communion, and clearer direction.

To this some will say, “God has not given me a vision for my life.” Well, my friend, have you taken that first step of faith? Christ clearly said in Matthew 16:24,

*“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”*

God didn’t immediately give Abram a vision, did he? Abram had to first trust God and go to the land that God would show him. It was only then that God gave Abram a vision of what would be. So, take that first step of faith. Give your life completely to Christ. And then, start walking with Him.

Well, I’ve done that pastor. What’s next? Well, keep walking, even if you don’t see the promise yet. And through God’s Word, and in God’s time, He will give you a vision of what can be in your life.

For others, God has given you this vision for your life. If that is so, then pitch your tent in Hebron—stay in communion with God. Keep your heart fixed on Mamre—hold fast to the vision. Walk with the God who keeps His promises.

CONCLUSION

This morning, God is calling us back to the altar. Back to that place of decision. Will we commit our lives to His plan and His provision? When the challenges come, will we reject worldly wisdom and choose to walk in His promises?

*6 So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”*

*7 Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. 8 Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham:*

*“All nations will be blessed through you.”*

*9 So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (Galatians 3:6-9)*

This morning, let us be the people who rely on faith. Let us be blessed along with Abraham, the main of faith. Will you join me at the altar?