

A family feud threatens God's plan

Sermon for Sunday, September 26, 2010
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: Genesis 13

[The Scripture reader read portions of Genesis 13, and I played the part of Abram, talking about what was going on in each section. Some of the sections are just outlines of what I would say; others have it written out.]

¹Abram went north out of Egypt to the southern part of Canaan with his wife and everything he owned, and Lot went with him. ²Abram was a very rich man, with sheep, goats, and cattle, as well as silver and gold. ³Then he left there and moved from place to place, going toward Bethel. He reached the place between Bethel and Ai where he had camped before ⁴and had built an altar. There he worshiped the LORD.

Abraham is thrilled:

- Was sure that the king of Egypt was going to kill him for causing such trouble.
- So thankful to be allowed to go freely
- Return to the place where we first set up camp. We had an altar there, where we offered sacrifices and worshipped God. Oh, how I've missed that!
- All this mess happened because I forgot about you, Lord. I'm so sorry. Please take me back.

⁵Lot also had sheep, goats, and cattle, as well as his own family and servants. ⁶And so there was not enough pasture land for the two of them to stay together, because they had too many animals. ⁷So quarrels broke out between the men who took care of Abram's animals and those who took care of Lot's animals. (At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were still living in the land.)

But now we have another problem, Lord. Isn't this ironic! You have blessed us *too much*! We have so many cattle and sheep and other livestock, that the land cannot feed them all. When my servants take the animals to the stream to drink, the servants of my nephew Lot are there with his animals, and there just isn't room for them all. Then the servants start arguing and fighting, and it's causing hard feelings between us.

This is the land you said you would give us, so I shouldn't move to another place. But I don't have the heart to tell Lot to get out of here. He's family!

What's that? Give it to him? Let him have whatever he wants? But Lord, you said this land would belong to me

and our descendants. How can that be if it belongs to Lot? ...

Trust you. Just trust you. But... Yes, I know what happened last time I did it my own way. I don't want to go back there. OK, Lord, we'll do it your way. I'll just let him take all the land he wants, and I'll take whatever is left over.

⁸Then Abram said to Lot, "We are relatives, and your men and my men shouldn't be quarrelling. ⁹So let's separate. Choose any part of the land you want. You go one way, and I'll go the other."

¹⁰Lot looked around and saw that the whole Jordan Valley, all the way to Zoar, had plenty of water, like the Garden of the LORD or like the land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD had destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹So Lot chose the whole Jordan Valley for himself and moved away toward the east. That is how the two men parted. ¹²Abram stayed in the land of Canaan, and Lot settled among the cities in the valley and camped near Sodom, ¹³whose people were wicked and sinned against the LORD.

Lord, you know, I have a bad feeling about all this. He's still a young man, and if I'm not around to give him guidance... well, I'm afraid he's going to fall under the influence of the people of this land. You know they don't follow you, Lord. He should be the one to testify about your goodness, but I don't think it's going to work that way.

¹⁴After Lot had left, the LORD said to Abram, "From where you are, look carefully in all directions. ¹⁵I am going to give you and your descendants all the land that you see, and it will be yours forever. ¹⁶I am going to give you so many descendants that no one will be able to count them all; it would be as easy to count all the specks of dust on earth! ¹⁷Now, go and look over the whole land, because I am going to give it all to you." ¹⁸So Abram moved his camp and settled near the sacred trees of Mamre at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

[*climb up on a chair "hill", and scan the horizon in all directions*]. That's even *more* than what you said the first time! O, Lord, how great and wonderful you are! Forgive me for ever doubting you and turning away from you. I am yours, Lord.

Bonus Section!

*Extra commentary on verse 2, separate from the sermon.
I used this to introduce the offering.*

Verse 2: “He was very rich.” Literally, in Hebrew: “He was very *heavy*.” The translation is correct: “heavy with livestock and gold” means the same as rich. But the connection between wealth and weight is fascinating!

Riches are a burden:

- There is a burden of care in getting them
- fear in keeping them
- temptation in using them
- guilt in abusing them
- sorrow in losing them
- and a burden of giving an account at the final judgement for what one did with it all.

I wonder how many family fights have been caused by the love of money. I personally have seen several families fight over the will of a mother or father. I don't know anyone who won a big lottery, but the newspapers often publish reports about the breakup of families and friendships after someone wins \$50 million; everyone thinks the winner should give them a share. Yes, wealth can be a heavy burden.