

The Book of Genesis

Lesson 10: Abram and Lot; God's Covenant of Faith -- Genesis 13:1–15:21

Abram is back in the land, richer than ever, and that is where the first trouble starts. He and his nephew Lot have so many flocks and herds that the land cannot hold them both, and their herdsmen begin to quarrel. Here is the older man, the one with the promise, the one who could have pulled rank. Instead Abram does something remarkable. He turns to Lot and says, in effect, you choose first. The whole land is before you. If you go left, I will go right; if you go right, I will go left. A man who truly believes God owns the future does not have to grab the best for himself.

Lot looks out over the well-watered Jordan valley, green as the garden of the Lord, and takes it, pitching his tent toward Sodom, a city whose name is already a byword for wickedness. Abram is left with the leftovers, and the moment Lot departs, God speaks: lift up your eyes, look in every direction, all this land I will give to you and your offspring forever. The man who let go of his claim receives the promise renewed. This is the strange math of faith: the open hand ends up holding more than the grasping one.

Then comes a war, and Lot, who chose to live near Sodom, is swept up as a prisoner when the city is raided. Abram, the peaceable shepherd, becomes a rescuer, arming his household and chasing the kings through the night to bring his nephew home. And on his way back he meets a mysterious figure, Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, who brings out bread and wine and blesses him. Abram gives him a tenth of everything, and then flatly refuses to take a single thread from the king of Sodom, lest anyone say, "I have made Abram rich." His confidence is not in the spoils of the world but in the God who provides.

And then, in chapter fifteen, God draws close in the dark and speaks the words that anchor the whole gospel. "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." Abram pours out his honest ache, he is still childless, and God takes him outside and tells him to number the stars: so shall your offspring be. And then comes one of the most important sentences in all of Scripture: "And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness." Not earned, not achieved, but credited, received by faith. Read this passage slowly, because here, centuries before the cross, God shows us how a sinner is set right with Him: by trusting His promise. This is the soil out of which the gospel grows.

Group Discussion: When strife arose, Abram gave Lot the first pick of the land, even though Abram was the elder and held God's promise (13:8–9). What does that choice reveal about Abram's trust in God, and where is it hardest for you to let go of your own advantage and trust God to provide?

Personal Reflection: God told Abram, "I am your shield; your reward shall be very great" (15:1). God offered Abram not just gifts but Himself. Be honest: do you mainly want what God can give

you, or do you want God Himself as your greatest treasure? How would you know the difference in your own heart?

Read Genesis 13:1–15:21

Study Questions

1. When their herdsmen quarreled, Abram let Lot choose first and took whatever was left, trusting God rather than grasping for the best portion (13:8–12). What does this reveal about the difference between a life of faith and a life of self-interest?
2. Where in your life are you tempted to grasp, to secure the best for yourself, to insist on your rights, to compete for advantage, rather than trusting God to provide and care for you?
3. Returning from battle, Abram is met by Melchizedek, “priest of God Most High,” and gives him a tenth of everything, then refuses to take any spoils from the king of Sodom (14:18–24). Who is Melchizedek, how does he point forward to Christ (Hebrews 7:1–3), and what does Abram’s refusal of the spoils reveal about his trust in God?
4. Abram would not let the king of Sodom be able to say, “I have made Abram rich.” Where might you be tempted to compromise your integrity, or to depend on the wrong source, for the sake of money, security, or advancement?
5. God said to Abram, “I am your shield; your reward shall be very great” (15:1). What does it mean that God offers Himself, and not merely His gifts, as our reward? Why does this matter for how we relate to God?
6. Is God Himself your treasure, or have His gifts (blessings, comfort, security, even answered prayers) become more precious to you than He is? What would it look like to delight in God as your “very great reward”?
7. Abram brought his honest struggle to God, his pain at still being childless despite the promise, and God responded not with rebuke but with the promise of descendants like the stars (15:2–5). What does this teach us about bringing our real questions and aches to God?
8. Where do you tend to hide your doubts, fears, or disappointments from God rather than bringing them honestly to Him in prayer? How might Abram’s example change the way you pray this week?
9. Genesis 15:6 says, “And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.” What does it mean to be counted righteous through faith (see Romans 4:1–5; Galatians 3:6–9)? And how do we understand this rightly, given that genuine faith is a trusting, obeying faith and not mere mental agreement (James 2:21–24)?
10. Look back over the whole passage. Name one specific way God is calling you to live by faith, to hold your possessions loosely, to treasure God Himself, to pray honestly, and to rest in being counted righteous through trusting Him.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Romans 4:1-5, 18-25, Abraham believing God and being counted righteous; Galatians 3:6-9, those who have faith are the sons of Abraham; James 2:21-24, Abraham's faith working together with his works; Hebrews 7:1-3, Melchizedek as a type of Christ our priest; Hebrews 11:8-10, Abraham looking for the city with foundations.