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Sermon Notes

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## **Abram's Faith and Lot's Faithlessness**

**Genesis 13:1-18**

Introduction:

In the summer of 1986, two ships collided in the Black Sea off the coast of Russia. Hundreds of passengers died as they were hurled into the icy waters below. News of the disaster was further darkened when an investigation revealed the cause of the accident. It wasn't a technology problem like radar malfunction--or even thick fog. The cause was human stubbornness. Each captain was aware of the other ship's presence nearby. Both could have steered clear, but according to news reports, neither captain wanted to give way to the other. Each was too proud to yield first. By the time they came to their senses, it was too late.

*Closer Walk, December, 1991.*

Here in this striking account, we see a potential disaster averted. Abram and Lot came face to face with a quarrel over grazing rights and water. Abram's faith, strongly restored by the return to the Promised Land, allowed him to yield graciously to his nephew, and to give a marvelous example of how an eternal perspective enables us to be content with what we have and generous to others... knowing that someday we will inherit everything...

For Jesus said

***Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.***

We have in Genesis 13 the beginning of a character study of Lot as a direct contrast to the faith-filled life of Abraham.

Illus. Once I went with some friends to a diamond-selling house in Old Amsterdam. We were brought into a private viewing room and they brought out some diamonds to display. But first, they spread out a black velvet cloth so that the contrast of the brilliance of the diamond against the black backdrop of the velvet would set out the diamonds fiery qualities.

So also does scripture frequently use contrast:

- the bickering selfishness of the sons of Jacob and the suffering patience and greatness of Joseph
- the craven disobedience of King Saul and the man after God's own heart, David

- John 18: the cowardly denials of Peter woven against the astonishing and sublime courage of Jesus Christ

Here also, we have the beginning of an extended contrast... the sensual, selfish, faithlessness of Lot who ends up living in Sodom; and the generous, faith-filled example of Abram whose eyes are on a city with foundations, a heavenly city

## I. Abram's Faith-filled Restoration (vs. 1-4)

**vs. 1-4** *So 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.*

### A. Abram's Sojourn in Egypt: A Spiritual Disaster

1. Lack of faith prompted his leaving the Promised Land

**Genesis 12:1** *The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.*

**vs. 10** *Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.*

Could not the God who created heaven and earth meet Abram's needs in the Promised Land, even during a severe famine?

**Genesis 22:8** *Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.*

**Matthew 16:8** *Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?"*

2. Lack of faith in God prompted Abram's command to Sarai to lie
3. Lack of faith in God led to immense trouble with Pharaoh
4. But where we are faithless, God is faithful

**2 Timothy 2:13** *if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.*

Abram now returns to the Promised Land, having escaped the wrath of Pharaoh only by the sovereign hand of God

But he carries some baggage with him:

B. Abram “Heavy” With Wealth

**vs. 2 Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.**

1. Hebrew: literally “heavy” with wealth

a. gold is among the densest metals known to man

If my Bible were made of solid gold, it would weigh over 42 pounds!

If the top part of this pulpit were made of solid gold, it would weigh over a ton!!

b. Abram traveled about in tents, presumably lugging around on camel-back all his possessions

c. wealth can be a crushing burden

**John P. Lippett:** I've been more bossed by my fortune than it has been bossed by me.

2. God sometimes permits godly men great wealth... but even then it is a great burden

***1 Timothy 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.***

Matthew Henry:

Abram was very *heavy*, so the Hebrew word signifies; for *riches are a burden*, and those that *will be rich do but load themselves with thick clay*. 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 account, at last, to be given up concerning them. Great possessions do but make men heavy and unwieldy. Abram was not only rich in faith and good works, and in the promises, but he was *rich in cattle, and in silver and gold*.

[However,] God, in his providence, sometimes makes good men rich men, and teaches them how to abound, as well as how to suffer want. The riches of good men are the fruits of God's blessing. God has said to Abram, *I will bless thee*; and that blessing made him rich without sorrow, [Prov. x. 22](#). 3. True piety will very well consist with great prosperity. Though it is hard for a rich man to get to heaven, yet it is not impossible, [Mark x. 23, 24](#). Abram was very rich and yet very religious.

3. Soon this wealth and Lot's will be a source of contention between them

**vs. 6-7 *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 herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.***

### C. Abram Returns to His Spiritual Roots

1. Abram needs his souls restored
2. The trip to Egypt has be a spiritual disaster
3. The text stresses his return to where he started spiritually

**vs. 3-4** *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.*

The account is in Genesis 12:7-8

**Genesis 12:7-8** *The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.*

4. Our souls need to be restored from sin

**Psalm 23:1-3** *The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

- a. every day with Jesus not sweeter than the day before
- b. sometimes we lose our way spiritually, as Abram did
- c. Abram returned to his spiritual roots by going back to Bethel and Ai, to the place where he had first built the altar to the Lord
- d. there Abram returned to the Lord with earnest prayer and with sacrifice
- e. thus did God graciously restore Abram in the pilgrimage of faith

Although God is omnipresent, there are still some special places in our pilgrimage with Him. Sometimes it is helpful to return to the place where you first made your pledge to serve Him, or where you fasted and prayed, or where you received your call to the mission field, or where the Lord met with you in a special way.

Example: Jacob at his own Bethel, near the city of Luz: "Jacob's Ladder"

**Genesis 28:16-17** *When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."*

Jacob never forgot that vision and that special place:

***Genesis 48:3 Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me***

So also God restored Abram's faith and his commitment to the promise through this return to Bethel and through his calling on the Name of the Lord

D. Calling on the Name of the Lord

1. Simply refers to prayer
2. More deeply, refers to saving faith

***Genesis 4:26 Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD.***

3. Calling on the God who has revealed Himself in History to invade history again on our behalf... to save us from our sins, to help us in our weakness... it involves trust, active faith, and is at the core of true Biblical worship
4. In the end, it is the way every person who is saved will be saved

***Romans 10:13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."***

Summary: Abram wandered from the Lord and from his calling as a man of faith when he left the Promised Land without God's permission. When he returned to the land, he returned even more significantly to the Lord.

***Hosea 6:1 "Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.***

***Joel 2:13 Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.***

## II. Abram's Faith-filled Peacemaking, Lot's Faithless Choice (vs. 5-13)

### A. The Cause of the Conflict: Wealth

1. The conflict began between their servants watching their flocks and herds

Illus. American West, disputes between cattlemen and homesteaders

2. Perhaps issue was water: Arguments over water most common

***Genesis 26:18-22 Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had***

**given them. 19 Isaac's servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there. 20 But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen and said, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek, because they disputed with him. 21 Then they dug another well, but they quarreled over that one also; so he named it Sitnah. 22 He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarreled over it. He named it Rehoboth, saying, "Now the LORD has given us room and we will flourish in the land."**

3. Canaanites and Perizzites were perhaps squeezing them for grazing land

B. The Cost of the Conflict: Their Testimony Further Hindered

1. Abram had already greatly compromised his witness by lying about Sari in Egypt
2. Now this argument over grazing rights further hindered it
3. How could they proclaim a Sovereign God who cares for His people after an argument like this?

***Philippians 2:14-16 Do everything without complaining or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe 16 as you hold out the word of life***

How could Abram and Lot “hold out the word of life” to the Canaanites and Perizzites when they are arguing about water for their many cattle?

C. Abram’s Faith-filled Example of Peacemaking

1. Truth be told, it was not Abram who argued
2. Abram gives an excellent example of how to end a conflict

***vs. 8-9 So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. 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."***

a. gentle answer

***Proverbs 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.***

b. humility

***vs. 8 "...we are brothers"***

Strictly speaking, they were not brothers... Abram was the leader. But Abram reaches out humbly to Lot

Illus. Booker T. Washington

A truly humble man is hard to find, yet God delights to honor such selfless people. Booker T. Washington, the renowned black educator, was an outstanding example of this truth. Shortly after he took over the presidency of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, he was walking in an exclusive section of town when he was stopped by a wealthy white woman. Not knowing the famous Mr. Washington by sight, she asked if he would like to earn a few dollars by chopping wood for her. Because he had no pressing business at the moment, Professor Washington smiled, rolled up his sleeves, and proceeded to do the humble chore she had requested. When he was finished, he carried the logs into the house and stacked them by the fireplace. A little girl recognized him and later revealed his identity to the lady.

The next morning the embarrassed woman went to see Mr. Washington in his office at the Institute and apologized profusely. "It's perfectly all right, Madam," he replied. "Occasionally I enjoy a little manual labor. Besides, it's always a delight to do something for a friend." She shook his hand warmly and assured him that his meek and gracious attitude had endeared him and his work to her heart. Not long afterward she showed her admiration by persuading some wealthy acquaintances to join her in donating thousands of dollars to the Tuskegee Institute.

c. sacrificial generosity

vs. 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."***

***Philippians 2:3-4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.***

d. wisdom

***James 3:13-18 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.***

3. Faith-filled perspective enables generosity in temporal conflicts

***1 Corinthians 3:21 So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours,***

***1 Corinthians 6:7 The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?***

D. Lot's Sensual and Selfish Choice: Following the Eyes

vs. 10-13 ***Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. (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 men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.***

1. A.W. Pink makes much of Lot's "eyes"

"Observe that Lot 'Lifted up his eyes and beheld'. In other words, he preferred to walk by sight rather than by faith. How impossible, then, for Lot to remain with Abram! How can two walk together except they be in agreement? Abram 'endured as seeing him who is invisible,' while Lot's heart was set upon the things of time and sense. Hence we are told, 'they could not dwell together' in verse 6. It was a moral impossibility."

Pink went on to discuss how much trouble comes in through being led by the eyes:

"This was the commencement, outwardly, at least, of a decline which ended in the utmost shame. Eye-gate is one the avenues through which temptations assault the soul: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life is not from the Father but from the world." (1 John 2:16) Walking by sight is the cause of most of our failures and sorrows."

- Eve fell when she saw that the fruit was pleasant to the eyes
- Achan fell when he saw in Jericho a beautiful Babylonian robe and two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels
- David fell when he saw Bathsheba bathing

2. What did Lot see??

***vs. 10 Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar.***

- a. this land was plush and lavish... it looked like the Garden of God
- b. it looked inviting, it looked cool and refreshing
- c. AND (significantly) it reminded Lot of Egypt

Lot had caught a spiritual virus in Egypt... the love for comfort and ease; the sensual life of material prosperity

That virus infected his heart and his eyes gave his heart all the information it needed

3. What did Lot not see?

**THE TRUE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF SODOM!!!!**

- a. he did not see the wrath of God hanging over their heads

***vs. 10 (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)***



The lush Garden of Sodom was under the intense wrath of God... its days were numbered

***John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."***

b. he did not see their great wickedness in the eyes of God

***vs. 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.***

Paraphrasing Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God"

There were black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over the heads of the Sodomites, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and had it not been for the restraining hand of God, it would have immediately burst forth upon Sodom. The sovereign pleasure of God, at that moment in history, was staying his rough wind; otherwise it would have come with fury, and Sodom's destruction would have come like a whirlwind, and the Sodomites would have been like the chaff of the summer threshing floor.

The wrath of God was like great waters that had been dammed for the present; they increased more and more, and rose higher and higher, till an outlet was given at last; and the longer the stream was stopped, the more rapid and mighty was its course, when once it is let loose. ... the floods of God's vengeance had been withheld; but Sodom's guilt was in the mean time constantly increasing, and every day they were treasuring up more wrath; the waters were constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there was nothing but the mere pleasure of God, that held the waters back, that were unwilling to be stopped, and pressed hard to go forward. If God had only withdrawn his hand from the flood-gate, it would have immediately flown open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would have rushed forth with inconceivable fury, and would have come upon Sodom with omnipotent power; and if the strength of each Sodomite were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would have been nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath was bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bent the arrow directly at Sodom's heart, and strained the bow, and it was nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that kept the arrow one moment from being made drunk with Sodom's blood."

**This is what Lot did not see as he looked out over the lush valley of Sodom, a valley as rich as the Garden of God**

#### E. The Future Cost of Lot's Faithless Choice

Illus. A wealthy plantation owner invited John Wesley to his home. The two rode their horses all day, seeing just a fraction of all the man owned. At the end of the day, the plantation owner proudly asked, "Well, Mr. Wesley, what do you think?" After a moment's silence, Wesley replied, "I think you're going to have a hard time leaving all this."

##### 1. Gradual corruption... enticed little by little by Sodom

- a. at first, he saw it from afar... from the ridge on which he overlooked the valley
- b. then he moved his tents “toward Sodom”

**vs. 12 Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near (toward) Sodom.**

- c. then was abducted in the war of the nine kings in Genesis 14 and chose to return to Sodom afterward!!! Knowing by then how wicked they were!!!!
- d. eventually was living in a house within the walls of Sodom, perhaps even as a gatekeeper or official
- e. his wife was totally enamored with Sodom and looked backward when fleeing
- f. his sons-in-law perished there after mocking his earnest warnings to flee the wrath to come
- g. his daughters in law were morally corrupt and no wonder... Lot had offered them as sexual substitutes for the angels who had come into his house
- h. he ended up in a cave, drunk, with his two daughters, who conspired to become pregnant by their own father

One of the most sordid and despicable descents into corruption in the Bible

And it all began that fateful afternoon on the heights overlooking the lush valley of the Jordan

Oh the terrifying end of a journey in sin!!! Lot lifted his eyes and looked at the lush lifestyle and loved it more than God

He should have stayed near righteous Abram, the man who had received the promises from God... instead he chose his own way

- 2. YET: God counted him righteous by faith and refused to allow the angels to destroy Sodom while he lived in it

**Genesis 19:22 “But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it.”**

**2 Peter 2:7 [God] rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men**

Lot’s example is terrifying... a man led by his eyes into corruption and incredible loss

Yet Lot’s example shows all that God will do to save one of his own out of that corruption and to preserve him from ultimate wrath.

### III. God's Renewed Promise to Abram (vs. 14-18)

**vs. 14-18** *The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, 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 moved his tents and went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the LORD.*

#### A. Lot's Separation from Abram: Its Significance

1. Abram and Lot had different agendas and different worldviews at that moment
2. Lot wanted to live by sight, Abram wanted to live by faith
3. They HAD to separate, for nothing could happen for Abram while with Lot

#### B. God's Renewed Two-Fold Promise to Abram

1. Faith must be sustained, it must be renewed
2. So God repeatedly made the same two promises to Abram
3. More than that, God wanted to fill Abram's mind with the sight of faith

**The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, 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."**

4. God wanted Abram to touch the soil, smell it, experience it
5. Abram's look and walk was by faith, unlike Lot's

#### C. Promise #1: The Land

#### D. Promise #2: The Numerous Descendants

### IV. Abram's Life of Tents and Altars

**vs. 18** *So Abram moved his tents and went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the LORD.*

#### A. Promised Land is NOT Possessed Land

1. The land was promised directly to Abram, as well as to his descendants

2. Yet the Canaanites and Perizzites were constant reminders that the Promise had NOT YET been fulfilled
3. Later, in Genesis 15, Abram would be told that his descendents would wait another four hundred years before they could take possession of the land
3. Abraham DIED never having received the land, as the book of Hebrews tells us very plainly

***Hebrews 11:13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.***

#### B. Abram Lived in Tents

1. A tent is the very symbol of an alien and stranger in the land
2. It has no lasting foundation and can be moved easily when it is time to move
3. Therefore Hebrews again tells us of the significance of the tents

***Hebrews 11:9-10 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.***

Illus. Selling everything to go on the mission field... we had no keys

Illus. Helping an older woman move out of the home she'd been in for decades

#### C. Abram Built Altars

***vs. 18 So Abram moved his tents and went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the LORD.***

1. Abram's faith renewed by periodic revelations of the promise from God
2. Abram's faith also renewed by the regular practice of building altars to God and calling on the name of the Lord
3. This was the ancestral altar, the family altar of Abraham... the father of nations was leading his family in worship long before God sent them their promised son Isaac

## V. Spiritual Lessons

1. On wealth

In this passage, wealth is neither seen as a blessing or a curse. We can see it to be a blessing from God for the sustaining of his family during a famine... for much of Abram's wealth was in the form of livestock. Or we can see it as the root cause of the conflict with Lot that led to their splitting up. But wealth is a burden that must be carried everywhere you go when you live in a tent.

John Wesley: "Money never stays with me. It would burn me if it did. I throw it out of my hands as soon as possible, lest it should find its way into my heart."

## 2. On resolving conflict

Abram shows the way that a faith-filled man resolves conflict. If you truly believe that you will inherit the earth eternally, then what difference does it make who gets what now? Can we not then be generous and gladly wronged even if Lot chooses the better portion for himself? A gentle answer like Abram's turns away wrath... but it also frees you up to go on a faith-filled walking tour with God Almighty showing you all that you will inherit someday. I would not trade one minute of that walking tour with God for a year of living in the plush valley of Sodom.

## 3. On choosing by faith and not by sight

Lot's choice was that of Esau... faithless and motivated by fleshly desire for comfort and luxury. Abram's choice was made by faith and not by sight. When you are faced with taking this or that job, buying this or that home, going this or that way in your career, marrying this person or going to this church or going on some mission trip... make every decision based on this one question: Which path requires me to trust God more, and which one is better for my soul?

## 4. On living near Sodom

Lot got sucked little by little into the lifestyle of Sodom, and he absolutely ruined his family. He himself was saved, but only as one escaping from the flames. Beware living near the City of Destruction. America has just as much prosperity, luxury, and sexual immorality as did Sodom. Is it slowly, imperceptibly causing you to drift away from Christ? Do you find your heart getting more and more hardened to spiritual things because you are more and more taken in with the things of this world? Beware the quicksand of luxury, comfort and sensual ease. What shocks you? Does the gay marriage movement shock you? It is drunk with the spirit of Sodom!! Do you simply shrug and say, "To each his own?" Or are you willing to make your stay here more unpleasant by speaking up for righteousness?

## 5. On renewing your faith in God's promises

Abram's experience here shows the need for constant spiritual renewal. Abram's trip to Egypt was a spiritual disaster!! But God knew how to renew him and get him back on the right path again. He led Abram back to his spiritual roots... to the very place where he'd first built the altar to God. Later in this account, God spoke again, and in greater detail the original promises He'd made to Abram. Does your faith in God's promises need restoring today? Such restoration comes most clearly from hearing God's word speak the promises all over again. Go someplace quiet this afternoon, get a blanket out of the car trunk, sit under a quiet tree and open the Bible. Read again what God has in store for you in Christ:

3 **"Blessed** are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 **Blessed** are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 **Blessed** are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 **Blessed** are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 **Blessed** are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 **Blessed** are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 **Blessed** are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

10 **Blessed** are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 **"Blessed** are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Renew your faith in God's promises by hearing God speak them to your heart all over again.

#### 6. On tents and altars

C.S. Lewis: "Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home."

Acknowledge today that you are an alien and a stranger here on earth... that you are just passing through. Acknowledge that you have no permanent dwelling place anywhere here on earth. Look on your pilgrimage here as one in a tent... with no permanent foundation. Strip your lifestyle down and stop accumulating material possessions. Live for the future City of God, the Eternal City of Light and Glory where you will be given permanent possessions and an inheritance of your own. And set up the altar to God. Have your daily quiet time and call on the name of the Lord. Father's re-establish the family altar... perhaps like Abraham you will have to repair it, pull the weeds off it, put some fallen stones back up... but lead your family in righteousness today!!

#### 7. On trusting in Christ for the first time

If you have never trusted in Christ, let today be the day of salvation for you.