

Three Life Questions

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[0 : 00] Thank you so much, praise band, for leading us this morning in worship. What a blessing you are. If you have your Bibles, I want you to turn to Genesis chapter 13. Genesis chapter 13.

You know life is strange. It seems like we kind of live life backwards. We make some of the most crucial decisions of our life when we don't know any better.

You see the value of your education when you're finished. No do-overs.

You see the wisdom of your parents when you're grown. You know the most about parenting when your kids are out of the house.

And you hear yourself as you get older say, if I'd only known, if I could do that again.

[1 : 07] So what can we learn from that? Now I will tell you, I've struggled with saying what I'm about to say because I know it may be offensive to you.

But the more I ponder, the more I believe it's true. We're not really prepared to handle life by ourselves.

Now I know a lot of self-made people may take offense to that. But I'm sorry. The reality is we're not really prepared to handle life by ourself.

It is as if we were not made to master it on our own, actually. And if we try, we're going to mess up. Lot messed up.

Abram's nephew, Lot, messed up. And I believe the account of his mess-ups are in Scripture so we don't make the same kind of mistakes ourselves.

[2 : 11] So I want us to look at Lot's example this morning. Not to follow it, to learn from it. Now, Genesis chapter 13, beginning in verse 1 says, 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, in 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. 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 Barizzazites were dwelling in the land. And 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.

[3 : 35] Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I'll go to the right. And if you take the right hand, then I'll go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered, everything like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt in the direction of Zor.

This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. That's a prophecy there, folks, aforementioned. 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, where 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.

I guess having too much is a good problem to have. You know, I guess it's better than having too little.

But it can also be a huge problem. Scripture says that he was very rich. In other words, Abram was rolling.

[4 : 56] You know, the word actually very rich, the word in Hebrew actually means heavy. So in other words, he was loaded. He appeared to be doing okay financially before he went into Egypt.

But remember when he went up to Egypt, Egypt took care of him. Because he gave his wife, he just claimed her as a sister, gave his wife to Pharaoh for a time.

And Egypt took care of him because of that. And he was able to take all that he had with him when the plagues came and Pharaoh said, take your wife and get out of here and all your stuff too.

So he left very rich. And he's loaded with people too. Family and all those acquaintances, extended family are like guests.

And Ben Franklin said, guests are like fish. After three days, they start to smell. And it was Abram's fault, quite honestly, that they were in this situation.

[6:10] God told him to leave his extended family behind. But he didn't. Took his father with him and his father had him hang out in Haran way too long.

And he was supposed to go to Canaan. But when times got tough, instead of trusting the Lord to get him through, he went to the wealth of Egypt and profited from it.

But he also inherited the mess that it made for him. Now as they leave Egypt, they have conflict.

Literally in the original language, that speaks of physical and verbal conflict, fighting.

They were getting after it. And it was the herdsmen against the herdsmen. So they're fighting over property and what sheep belongs to who and all that kind of stuff. And remember, they wasn't even supposed to be on this journey.

Lot wasn't even supposed to make it to this journey. And things were shook. And Lot was blessed with livestock as well. And verse 5 says they had many tents.

[7:22] Well, they had people in those tents. They had a flock of people with them too. And traveling with that many people, I mean, if you've ever been on a bus ride for several days, you know that no matter how big that bus is, it ain't big enough to be with those people.

And then with more livestock and more food and more water, all that's needed, and this is a land that was hit by the famine earlier. And besides that, Scripture tells us that the land is filled with Canaanites and Perizzocites.

I mean, Perizzocites sounds enough like parasites to make you know they're good for nothing, you know. But plus, let me add, Abram and his family were rich folk.

Rich folk have a sense of entitlement to them, you know. I mean, they don't want to just live off the land. They want to live nice, you know. I've come to define rich folk as those folks who, not for a special occasion, just for a meal out, they'll order an appetizer and dessert.

Man, what's that like, you know? And there are not a lot of desserts in this land. It's not there. And now everyone's sprawling out like Texas and something's got to give.

[8:51] And Abram could have said, get out, but he didn't. He didn't. He told Lot, pick where you want to go.

If you go to the left, I'll go to the right. If you go to the right, I'll go to the left. You pick where you want to go. Don't ever let that slip by unnoticed. Because Abram not only treated him like an equal, which he was not, but Abram put Lot before himself.

Not only does that speak of a corrected course in Abram's life along the way, but he is now following and trusting the Lord again. But it also speaks of an increase in his faith.

Because he's trusting the Lord he's going to provide. He didn't trust in himself. He didn't trust in Lot. He's just trusting in God.

And he gave God control of his future. And my friend, that's exactly where he needed to be. And that's exactly where we need to be. Lot, on the other hand, didn't do so well.

[10:08] And we can learn from both. The ramifications for Lot would be huge, but his future could be different if his decision-making was different.

But he didn't aim in the right direction. He wasn't really prepared to manage life by himself. Nor are we.

Now, I realize when I stand in this room, I am surrounded by a lot of smart, successful, and good people. And then there are those other ones.

But anyway. But we're prepared to manage our lives by ourselves. We feel like we are. But the reality is we're not prepared to handle life by ourselves.

And to be honest, we're not intended to handle life by ourselves. God made us to be in relationship with him and depend upon him. And that kind of dependence kind of rubs against us sometimes because we like to be independent.

[11:17] I don't need anybody else. I don't depend on anybody. I got this. Well, watch out because it'll eventually show what you got. And if we get that wrong, it causes a lot of headache.

And Lot got it wrong. Lot chose for himself. So this episode in his life that affected his future begs us to ask three life questions about ourselves.

One is this. Are we merely trusting what we can see? Are we merely trusting what we can see?

Lot was not grateful for what he had. He was greedy. And he was looking for more wealth and he was looking for more plenty and he was standing on the ledge in the midst of a parched land and he was seeing garden-like plains before him.

Garden of Eden style stuff. Now I'm telling you, the Jordan River was winding through the deepest gorge in the world with lush and green grass on both sides and beautiful palms all along the banks.

[12:29] It was around those areas that some of the great cities were built. But what he couldn't see from that angle was the rest of the river because the Jordan, the Yarden, means descender.

And the Jordan River is a sinking down as it goes and it, as in death of sorts because when John the Baptist baptized in the Jordan River, he symbolized the death of the old self and the resurrection of the spiritually dead to life in Christ.

And the sad reality is the life-giving waters of the Jordan dropped far below sea level, 1,414 feet below sea level into the Dead Sea, a sea so salty that nothing can live in it.

And I found out when I visited there that if you accidentally splash yourself in the eye, you won't see for quite some time. They say you can float.

But on the bus, on the way to the Dead Sea, that overcrowded bus I was talking about, somebody said, you know they say that if you ever get upside down in the Dead Sea, you bob and you can't get back up.

[13:52] So I went out there in the Dead Sea. Don't laugh at me. I went out there in the Dead Sea and I laid back. You know, I've seen people with pictures reading the newspaper and they're just floating.

And I leaned back and I thought I leaned back a little too far. And I didn't want to be the one dude in American history that visited Israel that drowned in the Dead Sea from bobbing and they couldn't get the old boy back up.

And so in my effort to sit back up, I splashed myself with a seawater that's ten times saltier than ocean water. And the trip was over. I was done.

The guy I was with said, hey man, watch it. I said, I can't see anything. It's a horrible experience. Lot should have known better. That's all I'm saying. What looked promising though to Lot's eye was actually choosing death.

And it's a lesson for us. Don't let money and possessions and property be your guide. Don't let that stuff cause quarrels and fights and divisions.

[15:10] It's not worth it. And that was not only Lot's, that was not his only mistake. The second question I think we ought to ask ourselves is this.

Are we solely making our own decisions? Because Lot was protecting his status. really.

Instead of his family. He was trying to get everything that he possibly could no matter what the cost. But the reality is the best may not always look like the greatest.

He was choosing for himself instead of trusting God. He felt certain for what he could see. And you shouldn't feel certain about what you can see. Actually, that's exactly the opposite of living a life of faith when Hebrews 11.1 describes faith as this.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. The conviction of things not seen. The things that you cannot see. How can we be certain about the things that we cannot see?

[16:16] We put our faith not in what we can do and not in what we can see but what in God can see and what God can do. And what God will do.

And that's why it's so important that we must be spirit led in our lives. Because that is the opposite of how we think in the flesh. And most of the time we believe it is the stuff that we can see that we can be certain of as we prognosticate about things.

But instead of what God will show us and Lot learned the difference. Sadly. Let's learn from Lot. Let's don't make the same mistake.

In reality his greatest uncertainty his greatest mistake came because he trusted what he saw. What he thought he could grasp. Third question is this.

Are we hanging out in the right places? Are we hanging out in the right places? He pitched his tent among the wrong people.

[17 : 24] He pitched his tent near Sodom. Now you know that we get our word sodomy from that word because of the depth of the sexual sin in that area.

However, their sin was more than that. Ezekiel 16, 49, and 50 says this about Sodom. It says, Sodom had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease.

But did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty and did an abomination before God. Now let me be clear about Sodom and we'll get there in a week or two.

If you think the Christian church can turn a blind eye to the sinful sexual abominations of the world, you're wrong. We can't. The world is loud. Loud about the matters of sex and gender.

And the church needs to stand and proclaim the truth in the matter as boldly as we hear it from others. But just as true, if we are proudly and easily ignoring the needs of others, Scripture says we're haughty and an abomination as well.

[18 : 46] It is not our job to focus on one and not the other. It's our job to take care of both. And not only was Lot pitching his tent near Sodom, but the Canaanites and the Perizzites were also living in that land.

Those are enemies of God's people. They are stumbling blocks for Lot. But his conflict was with a believer, which was Abram.

Abram, a man of faith. So let's not act like Abram and Lot because the reality is if believers struggle against each other, while we're struggling against each other, there's a lost world out there in the same land that we will fail to reach if all we do is get fascinated with each other.

Those who are against the work of the Lord are lurking. They want to embarrass us or see us embarrass ourselves. They are also the evils of the flesh nearby.

Scripture says, like a lion seeking whom he may devour. You need to remember as what Ephesians 6, 12 tells us, that we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

[20 : 14] Our battle's not against flesh and blood. Our hatred don't need to be shown upon each other. So while Christians take their eyes off of what we're supposed to be doing and deal with the trivialities among each other or just selfishly set our own course and do our own thing, the enemies of the Lord are striving to divide and to conquer.

Why wouldn't the devil take full advantage of that? Church, we can't be asleep. He took advantage in Lot's life because Lot wasn't paying attention and Lot didn't see it coming and the text reminds us here, prophesies to us that this is before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because God saw it coming.

Lot didn't see it coming and Lot didn't trust God with what he was to do. He just looked with his eyes. He picked what he thought was best. Friend, we don't know what tomorrow holds but we better know that the one that holds tomorrow we better know the one that holds tomorrow and we better let him call the shots of our life.

If not, we will inevitably keep pitching our tents a little bit closer to Sodom every time. Just inching. Just moving that way. Just moving that way. There's an option. There's an option that we ought to take and I think God, Abram, claimed that option and the option is to trust the Lord.

[21 : 54] Trust the Lord. He let God lead him and I want you to watch what happens when he let God lead him. it's in Genesis chapter 13 beginning in verse 14 and it says this.

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.

I'll 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, oh I love this, moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamrie which are at Hebron and there he built an altar to the Lord.

Oh, pick up on this difference. He didn't trust his vision. He trusted God's. He didn't choose for himself.

[23 : 02] He let God choose. He didn't pitch his tents with the wickedness of the world. He pitched his tents in the oaks of Mamrie. Mamrie is a Hebrew word for fatness.

That sounds a lot better than descending down to death, don't it? Not only that but it says he also was in Hebron and Hebron means fellowship. So in other words he was in a place of fatness and fellowship and he built an altar to the Lord.

He didn't try to manage his own life decisions. He let the Lord do that and God built a great nation through him. As Jesus reminds us he sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things whatever they are in your life these things will be added unto you as long as you seek the kingdom of God.

These things are that stuff that you need or the stuff that you're worried about. Trust God he'll take care of that. but it may be like for Abram in your life it may be that you need correction in your life you need repentance in your life you need to turn 180 degrees and that's exactly what Abram did he had to go back from where he had started and trust the one that he trusted when he was there before before he tried to go on his own because when he went on his own and made his own decisions he pitched his tents in Egypt and placed his wife in Pharaoh's house and placed his nephew under the influence of evil presence and got their mind off of what it needed to be on and led them to make bad decisions along the way and it wasn't until Abram came back to where he had been when he was right with God that God told him walk the land everything you see and everything you touch

I'll give to you and I'll bless you beyond measure that's an old man he's talking to and he just promised him the world I want to close with one more life question I know I said three I lied one more what do we do when we realize we messed up I got good news for you we begin again we begin again time is wasting folks but we can begin again and we can get it right aren't you thankful today that God always allows us to come back and make it right aren't you thankful today that God always allows us to come back and make it right amen but we first have to admit that we're not really equipped to manage our lives on our own and before you take offense of that I want you to know

[26 : 26] God never intended for us to do that he always intended for us to walk with him and depend upon him and allow him to guide us so let's not trust our eyes let's trust the Lord let's not choose for ourselves let's let God choose and let's watch where we hang out let's be careful where we pitch our tents instead let God guide us and when he guides us we'll be blessed with every head bowed and every eye closed in this room I ask you for something I ask you if you've ever made a decision to follow the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord Savior I want you to know if you haven't done that you've made a lot of wrong decisions along the way and the reality is that I'm thankful today that you have an opportunity of salvation today if you'll admit to the Lord

Jesus that you are a sinner that you've done wrong that you realize it's separated you from the Father that you'd like to take Christ's sacrificial death as your salvation and surrender your life to the Lord Jesus I want you to know he'll guide your path you can trust him that's a big step more than you can see I get that but I promise you he's right there with you guiding you all the way God's drawing you to himself today don't ignore him you respond as he speaks to your heart and life we'll stand in just a moment and we'll sing and as we do more important than singing it's your invitation to come we'd love to guide you in what it means to have a personal relationship with Christ maybe you know that you do have a personal relationship with Christ but the reality is you're not going in the right direction you're pitching your tent in the wrong place you're living off your own site you're not doing exactly what you need to do you need to come back to a place where you were before in your life where things were right and make it right again and I'm thankful that

God allows you to come back we can trust him with that you may want to do that personally where you are you may want to do it at this altar you may want a pastor to pray with you whatever it is I just encourage you to be obedient to God maybe God's drawing you to be a part of this fellowship you know this is your church home God's made that clear to you I encourage you to come as God leads you we'll guide you through that process or maybe there's one here today who's made a personal relationship with Christ and made that commitment to Christ but there's never been a time when you look back over your life since that time you gave your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ and I want you to know if that's the case it'll be a great hindrance in your life to keep you from being everything that God would have you to be the devil loves to play off of our lack of public confession of faith to make us weak in our faith so just trust him with that I have no idea how God

spoke to you I know how he spoke to me this week as I worked on this but I want you to know you'll never be satisfied unless you follow the Lord Jesus and in him you'll find your satisfaction so just trust him today and be obedient to him Lord Jesus I love you and I thank you for allowing us to study your word together to worship you dear God to hear from you God give us the boldness the fortitude the wisdom the strength dear God to respond in obedience as you speak to our hearts and lives lead us right now oh God I pray in Jesus name amen