

Introduction:

- A. I'm just a sucker for those home improvement shows on TV. *Property Brothers, Flip or Flop, Love It or List It, House Hunters*. They're like Teletubbies for adults. Same every single time and yet I watch every episode with fresh fascination! *Fixer Upper!* The best!

Did you see the one with **Dr. Tim and Janice McCall**—missionaries who run an orphanage in Uganda, and their three grown kids want to provide a home for them on their visits back to Waco, TX. In Uganda they live in 160 sq. feet made out of a shipping container. Their kids buy this decrepit place in Waco and then Chip and Joanna work their magic. The thing that struck me when I watched it again was that their *home* was still back in that shipping container in Uganda. This was just the place they'd stay when they visited the U.S.

- B. We've been studying the life of Abraham, a man who left one home to lay claim to another—to a homeland promised by God in Canaan. He and his wife Sarai and nephew Lot had arrived there and laid claim to the land for the LORD by building altars in two different places. Then, frightened by a famine, Abram & Co. left the borders of their God-blessed life for Egypt where they were disgraced (literally, *dis-graced*) and were evicted. Now in **Gen 13** they return home in the Bible's first Prodigal Son story: **vv.1-4...**
- C. So Abram has set things right with the Lord. He's offered repentant sacrifices at that altar and he's prayed, and God the Father welcomed him home with joy and grace. But it gradually became apparent that Abram had a problem: **vv.5-7....** Now remember, this is land God has given to Abram, not to Lot. And Abram is the head of the clan, not Lot. **But what troubles Abram is not the problem of land but the problem of relationships. That's because he's been with God.** Being with God always sensitizes us to relationships. **Vv.8-9...**

Does it seem that Abram is almost *too* nice? I mean he's upsetting the social order letting the younger have the best land. This wasn't like letting him have the first piece of *pie*. This was land. This was the future. What about if God *does* give Abram and Sarai a son, shouldn't he get that land? Well, here's a Bible principle:

I. THOSE WHO RELY ON GOD'S PROMISES CAN AFFORD TO BE LAVISH WITH GRACE

- A. Abram's priority was not problem-solving but peace. He did not want any quarreling in the family—not even down among the shepherds. **Peace was a higher value than property.** *Illus.:* I read in the paper this week about a bitter divorce that's been going on in Illinois for seven years! That's more like the world we know, isn't it? But Abram believed that it was beautiful and pleasing to God when the family was living in peace, even if it cost him dearly. Even if he took the *one-down* position so that it would happen.
- B. We're going to see Abram's faith in some big ways in the chapters ahead but here is faith, too. It takes faith to trust God with a conflict, to trust him with difficult people. It takes faith to say, "*Let's not have any quarreling between you and me,*" when it means that I'm the one who will have to make the first move, who will have to give up something treasured. I think Abram had the faith to trust God enough to show grace because he'd just been with God.

Remember what James tells us in **Jas 4:1**, "*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from **your** desires that battle **within you**?*" There's where we seek God's grace. "*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*"

- C. Is there someone in your life these days who threatens peace in the family, peace in the church? Are you feeling indignation growing that you're being taken advantage of? Abram isn't our only model. So is Jesus. **Phil 2:3-7** says, "*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the*

others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

*Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant...”*

It is only by being with the Lord, by bowing at his altar and listening to his voice, that we can come to that the same servant mindset that Jesus and Abram had.

What you'd like to hear is Lot saying, *“Are you kidding me!? You're the head of the clan. You're the man who took me in. This is the land God promised you. You go first.”* But this is actually what happened: **vv.10-13...** The more we get to know Lot in the chapters to follow the less I like him. **Frederick Buechner** noted that since God went out of his way later to rescue Lot from Sodom, Lot *“must have had something going for him. On the other hand, it's hard to see just what.”* [*Peculiar Treasures*, p.90]

The land Lot saw as he looked off toward the southeast, where the Jordan River watered a wide and verdant plain, was as green and beautiful as the garden of Eden, as the green fields watered by the Nile. But when he turned around he saw rugged, mostly brown hills. So he looked again at that magnificent sight to the east. **He never gave a thought to how irredeemably wicked the people of Sodom and the other cities of that plain were.** It never crossed his mind that they weren't just bad, they were *“sinning greatly against the LORD.”* The land might have been good but the people were toxic. Nothing good at all grew there. There was not one righteous person in all those towns. Not a single one! It was a beautiful piece of property to be sure but the cities there were a Dead Sea.

No matter how attractive the world around us is, when we've been with the Lord, at his altar, calling on his name...

II. WE SEE THE TERRIBLE DANGER OF LIVING AMONG THOSE WHO “SIN GREATLY AGAINST THE LORD.”

- A. Lot is a spiritual enigma. 2 Peter tells us that he was a righteous man who was grieved by the sin of Sodom, which is why God rescued him before Sodom was destroyed. But Lot did not know how dangerous it is for a person of little faith to build his life so close to the wicked. Now, all the Canaanites were sinful pagans. They were bad, idolatrous people. But the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were in a class by themselves, as you can see in Gen. 19, a chapter more likely to make you blush than any other in the Bible. And both Abram and Lot knew it. ... But that land *was “like the garden of the LORD”!* But isn’t it curious that the text also says it was *“like the land of Egypt,”* meaning, of course, that it was great farm land, but there’s sort of a hint of something else—that fruitless and faithless episode they had just returned in disgrace from in Egypt.
- B. We cannot avoid living among sinful people. What is most dangerous about those who *“sin greatly against the Lord,”* is that they live as though the LORD doesn’t matter, as though he need not be reckoned with. And that kind of faithlessness can get in your blood. It can worm its way into the minds of believers. We may not stop believing in God but we no longer see sin where he sees it, we no longer value the treasures he values, we no longer walk by faith.
- C. **V.12** says pointedly, *“Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom.”* Those people were already a dead sea of sin. The next time we see Lot in the next chapter it says he *“was living in Sodom,”* and eventually he becomes one of the town’s elders, sitting at the gate. We’re never told how his crops and herds did. Doesn’t matter. He lost his wife, and his daughters seduced *him.* He was like the people Paul wrote about in 1 Cor. 3, a man who had barely sufficient faith to be saved by God from judgment but who lost everything *“as one escaping through the flames.”*

- C. **1 Jn 2:15** says, *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.”* Paul wrote about a former colleague named Demas who, *“because he loved this world, has deserted me.”* [2 Tim 4:10] The wickedness of the world around us is subtle and seductive. Keep your distance. Live, as Abram did, in the land of God’s promises. Live mentally and spiritually where God puts you by his Spirit and Word.
- When we worship and seek the Lord we cannot afford to be at home among those who “sin greatly against the Lord.”**

V.10 had said that Lot *“looked around and saw the whole plain...”* Now after Lot leaves **v.14** says, *“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. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.’”* Lot looked around and **saw what he wanted**. Abram looked around and **saw what God was giving him**, including the land Lot was going to claim. Abram graciously gave it up and was none the poorer. **Vv.14-18...**

III. WHEN WE LIVE FOR GOD’S PROMISES NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE GIVE WE ARE NONE THE POORER (13:14-18)

- A. Did you notice that when God showed Abram all the land he’d been promised he looked in the very direction Lot had just gone? That land, too, would be his, though it would be blasted by the brimstone of the Judge of all the earth. But Abram was none the poorer for making the sacrifices of grace.
- B. Those great promises which God gave to Abram have flowered into even greater promises to us. Those whose meek hearts embrace Jesus will inherit the earth. We will see with our own eyes God’s new heaven and new earth. We will see that vast multitude gathered around God’s throne in heaven, the redeemed from every nation, tribe, people and language.
- C. I love the last two verses of this chapter: *“Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving*

it to you.’ 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.” It was customary in those days for a property owner to walk all his land and I love the picture it gives us, the challenge to walk the land of God’s promises.

- **Walk deep into the love God** so that you “*may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*” [Eph 3:18-19]
- **Walk the green pastures and still waters of God’s peace**, removed from this world’s troubles, peace that only Christ can give; peace of heart beyond our utmost understanding.
- **Walk into the high exuberant joy of the LORD** where we can sing and make music in our hearts to him, “*giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.*” [Col 1:12]
- **Walk the dark path to Golgotha** and see there that Jesus paid it all, that no condemnation now I dread, that every debt that you ever had has been paid up in full, that my sin—O the bliss of this glorious thought—my sin, not in part, but the whole is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more.
- **Walk to the empty tomb** and see there your own future, your own hope, and take heart
- **Now walk into the valley of death’s shadow.** See! There’s no evil to fear there. No scorpion sting, no evil victory. “*For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.*”
- **Walk into the city of the living God**—his beloved people, the church. Find brothers and sisters of every nation. Join your voice with theirs in worshiping the

Lamb of God. See that they are royalty, they are priests, they who once were orphans and rebels are now the very bride of Jesus.

- **Walk where the virtues of godliness are fitted to you,** where we, who once had nothing good in us, now bear spiritual fruit of love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Look how we're dressed—in the white robes of righteousness, bleached in the blood of Christ.
- **And walk to some high promontory where you can look off toward your home,** to the new Jerusalem which will come down out of heaven from God, to that city where there is no need of sun or moon, where the river flows with life and life is the fruit of the trees, and where Jesus will meet us, where we will see God, and where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes and there will no longer be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things will have passed away.

Walk the land of God's blessings. Take stock of your wealth in Christ. And build an altar there.