

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS CHAPTER 13

In this chapter we have a further account concerning Abram.

I. In general, of his condition and behaviour in the land of promise, which was now the land of his pilgrimage.

1. His removals, **#Ge 13:1,3,4,18**.

2. His riches, **#Ge 13:2**.

3. His devotion, **#Ge 13:4,18**.

II. A particular account of a quarrel that happened between him and Lot.

1. The unhappy occasion of their strife, **#Ge 13:5-6**.

2. The parties concerned in the strife, with the aggravation of it, **#Ge 13:7**.

III. The making up of the quarrel, by the prudence of Abram, **#Ge 13:8-9**.

IV. Lot's departure from Abram to the plain of Sodom, **#Ge 13:10-13**.

V. God's appearance to Abram, to confirm the promise of the land of Canaan to him, **#Ge 13:14-18**.

Ver. 1.

I. Here is Abram's return out of Egypt, **#Ge 13:1**. He came himself and brought all his with him back again to Canaan. Note, Though there may be occasion to go sometimes into places of temptation, yet we must hasten out of them as soon as possible. See **#Ru 1:6**.

II. His wealth: *He was very rich*, **#Ge 13:2**. He 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*, **#Hab 2:6**. 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*. Note,

1. God, in his providence, sometimes makes good men rich men, and teaches them how to abound, as well as how to suffer want.

2. 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, **#Pr 10:22**.

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, **#Mr 10:23,24**. Abram was very rich and yet very religious. Nay, as piety is a friend to outward prosperity (**#1Ti 4:8**), so outward prosperity, if well-managed, is an ornament to piety, and furnishes an opportunity of doing so much the more good.

III. His removal to Beth-el, **#Ge 13:3,4**. Thither he went, not only because there he had formerly had his tent, and he was willing to go among his old acquaintance, but because

there he had formerly had his altar: and, though the altar was gone (probably he himself having taken it down, when he left the place, lest it should be polluted by the idolatrous Canaanites), yet he *came to the place of the altar*, either to revive the remembrance of the sweet communion he had had with God in that place, or perhaps to pay the vows he had there made to God when he undertook his journey into Egypt. Long afterwards God sent Jacob to this same place on that errand (**#Ge 35:1**), *Go up to Bethel, where thou vowedst the vow*. We have need to be reminded, and should take all occasions to remind ourselves, of our solemn vows; and perhaps the place where they were made may help to bring them afresh to mind, and it may therefore do us good to visit it.

IV. His devotion there. His altar was gone, so that he could not offer sacrifice; but *he called on the name of the Lord*, as he had done, **#Ge 12:8**. Note,

1. All God's people are praying people. You may as soon find a living man without breath as a living Christian without prayer.
2. Those that would approve themselves upright with their God must be constant and persevering in the services of religion. Abram did not leave his religion behind him in Egypt, as many do in their travels.
3. When we cannot do *what we would* we must make conscience of doing *what we can* in the acts of devotion. When we want an altar, let us not be wanting in prayer, but, wherever we are, call on the name of the Lord.

Ver. 5.

We have here an unhappy falling out between Abram and Lot, who had hitherto been inseparable companions (see **#Ge 13:1 12:4**), but now parted.

I. The occasion of their quarrel was their riches. We read (**#Ge 13:2**) how rich Abram was; now here we are told (**#Ge 13:5**) that *Lot, who went with Abram*, was rich too; and therefore God blessed him with riches because he went with Abram. Note,

1. It is good being in good company, and going with those with whom God is, **#Zec 8:23**.
2. Those that are partners with God's people in their obedience and sufferings shall be sharers with them in their joys and comforts, **#Isa 66:10**. Now, they both being very rich, *the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell comfortably and peaceably together*. So that their riches may be considered,

(1.) As setting them at a distance one from another. Because the place was too strait for them, and they had not room for their stock, it was necessary they should live asunder. Note, Every comfort in this world has its cross attending it. Business is a comfort; but it has this inconvenience in it, that it allows us not the society of those we love, so often, nor so long, as we could wish.

(2.) As setting them at variance one with another. Note, Riches are often an occasion of strife and contention among relations and neighbours. this is one of those *foolish and hurtful lusts which those that will be rich fall into*, **#1Ti 6:9**. Riches not only afford matter for contention, and are the things most commonly striven about, but they also stir up a spirit of contention, by making people proud and covetous. *Meum* and *tuum*--*Mine* and *thine*, are the great make bates of the world. Poverty and travail, wants and wanderings, could not separate between Abram and Lot; but riches did. Friends are soon lost; but God

is a friend from whose love neither the height of prosperity nor the depth of adversity shall separate us.

II. The immediate instruments of the quarrel were their servants. The strife began between *the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle*, #Ge 13:7. They strove, it is probable, which should have the better pasture or the better water; and both interested their masters in the quarrel. Note, Bad servants often make a great deal of mischief in families, by the pride and passion, their lying slandering, and tale-bearing. It is a very wicked thing for servants to do ill offices between relations and neighbours, and to sow discord; those that do so are the devil's agents and their masters' worst enemies.

III. The aggravation of the quarrel was that *the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land*; this made the quarrel,

1. Very dangerous. If Abram and Lot cannot agree to feed their flocks together, it is well if the common enemy do not come upon them and plunder them both. Note, The division of families and churches often proves the ruin of them.

2. Very scandalous. No doubt the eyes of all the neighbours were upon them, especially because of the singularity of their religion, and the extraordinary sanctity they professed; and notice would soon be taken of this quarrel, and improvement made of it, to their reproach, by the Canaanites and Perizzites. Note, The quarrels of professors are the reproach of profession, and give occasion, as much as any thing, to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

IV. The making up of this quarrel was very happy. It is best to preserve the peace, that it be not broken; but the next best is, if differences do happen, with all speed to accommodate them, and quench the fire that has broken out. The motion for staying this strife was made by Abram, though he was the senior and superior relation, #Ge 13:8.

1. His petition for peace was very affectionate: *Let there be not strife, I pray thee*. Abram here shows himself to be a man,

(1.) of a cool spirit, that had the command of his passion, and knew how to turn away wrath with a soft answer. Those that would keep the peace must never render railing for railing.

(2.) Of a condescending spirit; he was willing to beseech even his inferior to be at peace, and made the first overture of reconciliation. Conquerors reckon it their glory to give peace by power; and it is no less so to give peace by the meekness of wisdom. Note, The people of God should always approve themselves a peaceable people; whatever others are for, they must be for peace.

2. His plea for peace was very cogent.

(1.) "Let there be no strife *between me and thee*. Let the Canaanites and Perizzites contend about trifles; but let not thee and me fall out, who know better things, and look for a better country."

Note, Professors of religion should, of all others, be careful to avoid contention. *You shall not be so*, #Lu 22:26. *We have no such custom*, #1Co 11:16.

"Let there be no strife between me and thee, who have lived together and loved one another so long."

Note, The remembrance of old friendships should quickly put an end to new quarrels which at any time happen.

(2.) Let it be remembered that *we are brethren*, Heb. *we are men brethren*; a double argument.

[1.] We are men; and, as men, we are mortal creatures--we may die to-morrow, and are concerned to be found in peace. We are rational creatures, and should be ruled by reason. We are men, and not brutes, men, and not children; we are sociable creatures, let us be so to the uttermost.

[2.] We are brethren. Men of the same nature, of the same kindred and family, of the same religion, companions in obedience, companions in patience. Note, The consideration of our relation to each other, as brethren, should always prevail to moderate our passions, and either to prevent or put an end to our contentions. Brethren should love as brethren.

3. His proposal for peace was very fair. Many who profess to be for peace yet will do nothing towards it; but Abram hereby approved himself a real friend to peace that he proposed an unexceptionable expedient for the preserving of it: *Is not the whole land before thee? #Ge 13:9*. As if he had said,

"Why should we quarrel for room, while there is room enough for us both?"

(1.) He concludes that they must part, and is very desirous that they should part friends: *Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me*. What could be expressed more affectionately? He does not expel him, and force him away, but advises that he should separate himself. Nor does he charge him to depart, but humbly desires him to withdraw. Note, Those that have power to command, yet sometimes, for love's sake, and peace' sake, should rather beseech us, we may well afford to beseech one another, *to be reconciled, #2Co 5:20*.

(2.) He offers him a sufficient share of the land they were in. Though God had promised Abram to give this land to his seed (*#Ge 12:7*), and it does not appear that ever any such promise was made to Lot, which Abram might have insisted on, to the total exclusion of Lot, yet he allows him to come in partner with him, and tenders an equal share to one that had not an equal right, and will not make God's promise to patronise his quarrel, nor, under the protection of that, put any hardship on his kinsman.

(3.) He give him his choice, and offers to take up with his leavings: *If thou wilt take the left hand, I will go to the right*. There was all the reason in the world that Abram should choose first; yet he recedes from his right. Note, It is a noble conquest to be willing to yield for peace' sake; it is the conquest of ourselves, and our own pride and passion, *#Mt 5:39,40*. It is not only the punctilios of honour, but even interest itself, that in many cases must be sacrificed to peace.

Ver. 10.

We have here the choice that Lot made when he parted from Abram. Upon this occasion, one would have expected,

1. That he should have expressed an unwillingness to part from Abram, and that, at least, he should have done it with reluctancy.
2. That he should have been so civil as to have remitted the choice back again to Abram.

But we find not any instance of deference or respect to his uncle in the whole management. Abram having offered him the choice, without compliment he accepted it, and made his election. Passion and selfishness make men rude. Now, in the choice which Lot made, we may observe,

I. How much he had an eye to the goodness of the land. He *beheld all the plain of Jordan*, the flat country in which Sodom stood, that it was admirably *well watered every where* (and perhaps the strife had been about water, which made him particularly fond of that convenience), and so *Lot chose all that plain*, #Ge 13:10,11. That valley, which was like the garden of Eden itself, now yielded him a most pleasant prospect. It was, in his eye, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth; and therefore he doubted not but that it would yield him a comfortable settlement, and that in such a fruitful soil he should certainly thrive, and grow very rich: and this was all he looked at. But what came of it? Why, the next news we hear of him is that he is in the briars among them, he and his carried captive. While he lived among them, he vexed his righteous soul with their conversation, and never had a good day with them, till, at last, God fired the town over his head, and forced him to the mountain for safety who chose the plain for wealth and pleasure. Note, Sensual choices are sinful choices, and seldom speed well. Those who in choosing relations, callings, dwellings, or settlements are guided and governed by the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, or the pride of life, and consult not the interests of their souls and their religion, cannot expect God's presence with them, nor his blessing upon them, but are commonly disappointed even in that which they principally aimed at, and miss of that which they promised themselves satisfaction in. In all our choices this principle should overrule us, That that is best for us which is best for our souls.

II. How little he considered the wickedness of the inhabitants: *But the men of Sodom were wicked*, #Ge 13:13. Note,

1. Though all are sinners, yet some are greater sinners than others. The men of Sodom were sinners of the first magnitude, *sinners before the Lord*, that is, impudent daring sinners; they were so to a proverb. Hence we read of those that *declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not*, #Isa 3:9.
2. That some sinners are the worse for living in a good land. So the Sodomites were: for this was the iniquity of Sodom, *pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness*; and all these were supported by the great plenty their country afforded, #Eze 16:49. Thus *the prosperity of fools destroys them*.
3. That God often gives great plenty to great sinners. Filthy Sodomites dwell in a city, in a fruitful plain, while faithful Abram and his pious family dwell in tents upon the barren mountains. 4. When wickedness has come to the height, ruin is not far off. Abounding sins are sure presages of approaching judgments. Now Lot's coming to dwell among the Sodomites may be considered,

(1.) As a great mercy to them, and a likely means of bringing them to repentance; for now they had a prophet among them and a preacher of righteousness, and, if they had hearkened to him, they might have been reformed, and the ruin prevented. Note, God sends preachers, before he sends destroyers; for he is not *willing that any should perish*.

(2.) As a great affliction to Lot, who was not only grieved to see their wickedness (#2Pe 2:7,8), but was molested and persecuted by them, because he would not do as they did. Note, It has often been the vexatious lot of good men to live among wicked neighbours, to *sojourn in Mesech* (#Ps 120:5), and it cannot but be the more grievous, if, as Lot here, they have brought it upon themselves by an unadvised choice.

Ver. 14.

We have here an account of a gracious visit which God paid to Abram, to confirm the promise to him and his. Observe,

I. When it was that God renewed and ratified the promise: *After that Lot was separated from him*, that is,

1. After the quarrel was over; for those are best prepared for the visits of divine grace whose spirits are calm and sedate, and not ruffled with any passion.
2. After Abram's humble self-denying condescensions to Lot for the preserving of peace. It was then that God came to him with this token of his favour. Note, God will abundantly make up in spiritual peace what we lose for the preservation of neighbourly peace. When Abram had willingly offered Lot one-half of his right, God came, and confirmed the whole to him.
3. After he had lost the comfortable society of his kinsman, by whose departure his hands were weakened and his heart was saddened, then God came to him with these good words and comfortable words. Note, Communion with God may, at any time, serve to make up the want of conversation with our friends; when our relations are separated from us, yet God is not.
4. After Lot had chosen that pleasant fruitful vale, and had gone to take possession of it, lest Abram should be tempted to envy him and to repent that he had given him the choice, God comes to him, and assures him that what he had should remain to him and *his heirs for ever*; so that, though Lot perhaps had the better land, yet Abram had the better *title*. Lot had the paradise, such as it was, but Abram had the promise; and the event soon made it appear that, however it seemed now, Abram had really the better part. See [#Job 22:20](#). God owned Abram after his strife with Lot, as the churches owned Paul after his strife with Barnabas, [#Ac 15:39,40](#).

II. The promises themselves with which God now comforted and enriched Abram. Two things he assures him of--a good land, and a numerous issue to enjoy it.

1. Here is the grant of a good land, a land famous above all lands, for it was to be the holy land, and Immanuel's land; this is the land here spoken of.

(1.) God here shows Abram the land, as he had promised ([#Ge 12:1](#)), and afterwards he showed it to Moses from the top of Pisgah. *Lot had lifted up his eyes and beheld the plain of Jordan* ([#Ge 13:10](#)), and he had gone to enjoy what he saw:

"Come," says God to Abram, "*now lift thou up thy eyes, and look, and see thy own.*"

Note, That which God has to show us is infinitely better and more desirable than any thing that the world has to offer our view. The prospects of an eye of faith are much more rich and beautiful than those of an eye of sense. Those for whom the heavenly Canaan is designed in the other world have sometimes, by faith, a comfortable prospect of it in their present state; for we look at the *things that are not seen*, as real, though distant.

(2.) He secures this land to him and his seed for ever ([#Ge 13:15](#)): *To thee will I give it*; and again ([#Ge 13:17](#)) *I will give it unto thee*; every repetition of the promise is a ratification of it. *To thee and thy seed*, not to Lot and his seed; they were not to have their

inheritance in this land, and therefore Providence so ordered it that Lot should be separated from Abram first, and then the grant should be confirmed to him and his seed. Thus God often brings good out of evil, and makes men's sins and follies subservient to his own wise and holy counsels. *To thee and thy seed--to thee to sojourn in as a stranger, to thy seed to dwell and rule in as proprietors. To thee, that is, to thy seed.* The granting of it to him and his for ever intimates that it was typical of the heavenly Canaan, which is given to the spiritual seed of Abram for ever, [#Heb 11:14](#).

(3.) He gives him livery and seisin of it, though it was a reversion:

"Arise, walk through the land, [#Ge 13:17](#). Enter, and take possession, survey the parcels, and it will appear better than upon a distant prospect."

Note: God is willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his covenant, and the inestimable worth of covenant blessings. *Go, walk about Sion, [#Ps 48:12](#).*

2. Here is the promise of a numerous issue to replenish this good land, so that it should never be lost for want of heirs ([#Ge 13:16](#)): *I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, that is,*

"They shall increase incredibly, and, take them altogether, they shall be such a great multitude as no man can number."

They were so in Solomon's time, [#1Ki 4:20](#), *Judah and Israel were many as the sand which is by the sea in multitude.* This God here gives him the promise of. Note, The same God that provides the inheritance provides the heirs. He that has prepared the holy land prepares the holy seed; he that gives glory gives grace to make meet for glory.

Lastly, We are told what Abram did when God had thus confirmed the promise to him, [#Ge 13:18](#).

1. He *removed his tent.* God bade him *walk through the land,* that is,

"Do not think of fixing in it, but expect to be always unsettled, and walking through it to a better Canaan:"

in compliance with God's will herein, *he removes his tent,* confirming himself to the condition of a pilgrim.

2. He *built there an altar,* in token of his thankfulness to God for the kind visit he had paid him. Note, When God meets us with gracious promises, he expects that we should attend him with our humble praises.