

Genesis 13:5-18

Reaping What You Sow

It's fascinating to me that right from the beginning Satan doesn't question God's right to make prohibitions. He doesn't question God's authority to make rules. What he questions is the idea that there are consequences to disobeying God.

In the garden he said to Adam and Eve "You shall not surely die!" To us he says, "How can you enjoy life without ___?" You fill in the blank. "Everybody has their vices. What harm can it do to break a few rules?"

The New Testament gives an answer to Satan's questions in Galatians 6. *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. Galatians 6:7-8*

In the natural universe there are physical laws or principles. There is the law of gravity, the law of aerodynamics, the law of thermodynamics. Those laws describe set reactions to specific circumstances.

The same holds true from the spiritual side of things. God has spiritual laws or principals that always hold true.

Just as the natural law says, what the farmer plants in his field will be what he harvests, the spiritual law says, what we plant in our life will be what we reap. We've been studying the life of Abraham in the book of Genesis. In the short time we've known this man we've seen some real spiritual strengths.

After the flood mankind quickly turned to idolatry and false worship, even though the world had seen this dramatic demonstration of God's wrath and power.

And by the time we're introduced to Abram, also know as Abraham, paganism and idolatry have dominated most of the world. God is at work though, fulfilling his eternal plan of salvation.

God appears to Abraham and tells him to leave his family and friends and to move to the land of Canaan. God promises to bless Abraham and make him the father of a great nation and ultimately to bless the whole world through him.

God's plan was, through Abraham to bring the Jewish people, and then through the

Jewish people to bring the prophets, the scriptures, and finally the Messiah who would die for the sins of the world.

Abraham responded to God's call but instead of leaving his family he took his father Terah and his nephew, Lot, along with him.

God never calls us to obey Him partially but to obey Him totally. God had a purpose for Abraham to accomplish that his family would hinder. God knew that both Terah and Lot would deter Abraham from doing His will. God was well aware of their hearts and their selfish motives, and he knew what their future attitudes and actions would be.

There is always a price to pay for incomplete obedience; for doing things half way in our Christian lives. But fortunately God is gracious, patient, and longsuffering even when we act in doubt instead of faith.

And in spite of our failures He's able to teach us valuable lessons and cause us to grow. So God allowed Abraham to take his father with Him.

His father Terah was still a pagan idolater and he hindered Abraham because as long as he was alive they never traveled any farther than Haran. Even though Abraham was married he still allowed Terah to be in charge of the family.

When his father finally passed off the scene that hindrance was removed and Abraham moved on into Canaan where he was supposed to be.

But God also allowed him to take Lot with him. And they weren't in the promised land long until Abraham began to feel some more effects of his incomplete obedience.

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Trouble started. The trouble wasn't any surprise to God, but probably blindsided Abraham. Lot's true character surfaced. What he was and always had been, revealed itself in a very ungrateful way.

I. There Are Lasting Consequences To Sin In Spite Of God's Grace

Read verses 5-7

Now remember some things here.

#1. God had promised Abraham this whole land of Canaan. There was a falling out between the herdsman *and the land was not able to support them*. That doesn't mean the whole land, because verse 9 says there was plenty of room if they spread out.

So what was getting crowded was the area they were living in together.

#2. Lot was wealthy due to his relationship with his uncle. Abraham took him under his wing, he shared his wealth with him and so Lot was really indebted to Abraham for what he had.

#3. Something happened which caused Lot to lose respect for Abraham. There was a famine in the land and because he had some doubt about God's provision Abraham took his entourage down to Egypt. There he lied about Sarah his wife and told Pharaoh that she was just his sister so that he wouldn't be murdered and Sarah taken.

In the end Pharaoh discovered the deception, rebuked Abraham, and sent him away.

If up until this time, Lot had any respect for Abraham I believe it was gone after this. Now, Abraham learned from his mistakes, the problem was, Lot didn't. And so when this situation came up with the herdsmen, Lot acted in a very insensitive and ungrateful way.

And there's an important lesson that stands out as we read through here.

God is going to use Abraham. See, even though we sin and fail God can use us. But there are lasting consequences to sin that are with us in spite of God's grace.

There were some residual effects of that time in Egypt that were going to trouble Abraham for years to come.

Even though he was forgiven as he turned back to God in faith, and even though in some ways he was spiritually stronger than before the Egypt experience, he still continued to reap the bad seed he had sown.

His problems revolved around two things he acquired in Egypt.

The first was an Egyptian girl named Hagar. She was a hand maid to Sarah his wife and she is going to be the source of a lot of trouble in the near future.

The second was a bad reputation before Lot. Wealth can be both a curse and a blessing in a person's life. There is plenty of Scripture directed towards handling money because it's one area that gives a lot of people trouble.

Abraham was able to handle this wealth as he grew spiritually. Lot never grew spiritually, in fact if we didn't have Peter's statement about him in the New Testament I would have assumed he wasn't even a believer. Especially after some of the stuff he pulls off in the next few chapters.

So Lot couldn't handle his wealth but instead seemed to be controlled by it. And unfortunately because of Lot's mistrust for his uncle, Abraham was never able to minister to Lot.

So here is a full-blown feud going on. One of the saddest things that can take place is difficulties between believers in front of non-believers.

In verse 7 we are told that the Canaanite and the Perizzite were in the land.

I don't believe we're told that simply to fill in a few unimportant details. The Bible always has a reason for mentioning the things that it does.

Here the obvious implication is that this fight between the herdsmen was going on in full view of the people of the land.

God led Abraham into that land so that through Him all families of the earth might be blessed. God called Abraham to be separate and different. To show others what a true believer in Jehovah God was really like.

So far, all this strife has just shown the local inhabitants that these foreigners are just like them. Abraham was apparently concerned about how his and Lot's testimony was affecting these ungodly people. You can see Abraham developing and strengthening in his faith as you move through each successive chapter. So Abraham offered a solution to the problem.

Read verses 8-9

Can you see how this is bringing out the true nature of these two men.

Abraham had recovered from the crisis of faith that drove him down into Egypt when there was a famine in the land. Now he's ready to retire to the hills if necessary, in order to honor God.

Abraham was the leader, he was the elder, he was the one to whom God had given the promises. How tempting it would be at this point to tell Lot where to get off.

Abraham had the right to any parcel of land that he chose. In fact, the whole thing was his by God's sovereign promise. But amazingly Abraham didn't chose to assert his rights at this point. Instead he abandoned them.

Donald Grey Barnhouse once said, "The only 'right' that any of us really has is the right to go to hell."

Seeing things from God's point of view, the way they really are, there is only one thing we deserve in life and that is God's wrath.

Everything else is ours by grace.

Here's God's critique of our lives: *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Romans 3:23

And then *The wages of sin is death.* Romans 6:23 The only thing that any of us sinners truly deserve is death.

See things in light of God's estimation and you will be a lot slower to demand what's coming to you. To demand your "rights."

Whoever realizes this will never try to maintain their honor and their rights. They're always ready to take the place of a servant because that is how Jesus always was. And there is no higher honor for us than to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord of Glory who made himself a servant.

Abraham wasn't afraid of losing his rights. Because he knew his rights were safe with God.

Abraham was willing at this point to say "Go whichever way you want to. Take what you want. I'll take the rest." Abraham had walked with God long enough now to know

that God would never abandon him. God was even with him on the trip to Egypt.

God promised to bless Abraham. And when God promises to bless us, He himself is our blessing and since he's with us, our geographical location really doesn't matter all that much.

A little is a lot when you are walking with God, and when you are walking with God you will always be satisfied. If you're always restless. If you're always looking for more in life. That's a good sign that you are not really walking with God.

I. There Are Lasting Consequences To Sin In Spite Of God's Grace

II. Walking By Sight Is The Cause Of Most Of Our Failures And Sins

In contrast to Abraham's attitude, notice how Lot responded to the situation.

Read verses 10-11

Lot looked at the best that the world had to offer and made his choice.

The person who lives for this the world system can't tolerate the presence of someone who determines to live for God.

Even if we're a believer in Jesus Christ, if we're not really living for God we get an uncomfortable feeling around someone who wants to honor Jesus Christ with their life. Why? Because it makes us feel guilty and ashamed.

It could even be that Lot looked at Abraham as a hypocrite for building altars and worshipping God after the fiasco in Egypt.

People who have no spiritual growth and sensitivity in their own life are usually pretty quick to condemn other people and are pretty slow to forgive the way God does.

Lot's confidence was in what he could see, never realizing that the eyes are the main avenue for temptation.

The Bible says, *For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.* I John 2:16

That was the beginning of the decline and fall of Lot. Walking by sight is the cause of

most of our failures and sins.

Eve who saw that the forbidden tree looked good: then she ate from it. Years after Abraham a guy named Achan would see the forbidden spoils of battle and caused a defeat for Israel. In confessing his sin he said, "I saw, I coveted, I took."

What are you looking at today? What's capturing your attention? Because whatever it is it's influencing your life.

Madison Avenue knows that well. That is why they want to keep all of those advertisements out in front of us for us to see. They're alluring. We have to have them. We deserve them!

Barnhouse writes, "Lot's eyes were the binoculars of his heart." I like that. What a realistic description.

His greedy eyes just sucked in the view of the well watered plain, and he made the fatal choice.

It is the circumstances of life that show our true spiritual condition. Circumstances don't make us or break us any more than a storm blows over a tree.

The rot in the middle of that tree or the shallow root system is revealed by the storm, but the flaw was there all the time waiting for the wind to expose it.

Verse 10 tells us that Lot looked at the good land of the plain of Jordan and saw it was like the land of Egypt.

Abraham had left Egypt behind forever. Lot was still comparing everything to what he had seen in Egypt and was choosing that which was most like the best in the world.

So verse 12... **Read verses 12 & 13**

God doesn't see as we see. The eyes of Lot saw the good land and said "Man, this is like the garden of Eden." But the holy eye of God saw something else. God saw the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful.

In Psalm 32:8 God says, *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.*

Lot rejected any guidance from God so Abraham and Lot part company

I. *There Are Lasting Consequences To Sin In Spite Of God's Grace*

II. *Walking By Sight Is The Cause Of Most Of Our Failures And Sins*

III. *The More We Obey God The More We Understand What He's Trying To Do In Our Lives*

Read verses 14 - 17

God's response to Abraham ought to be reassuring to anyone who refuses to compromise on the things of God even if it to cost him something.

The first revelation Abraham received was when God called him out of Ur. God said, *Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you.*

When Abraham finally obeyed and left Haran after the death of his father and actually entered Canaan, God became more specific in His promise. He said *To your descendants I will give this land.* Genesis 12:7 In other words "This is the actual land I promised you."

Now again, when Abraham makes a final surrender and separates from his nephew lot, giving up the best part of the promised land unselfishly and in faith, God becomes more specific in His revelation and tells Abraham that his obedience will be rewarded a thousand fold. God was saying, "You haven't given up anything, Abraham, in view of what you and your descendants will eventually receive."

With each step of obedience came greater light and greater reassurance. That's the way God often works with us. The more we obey Him the more we understand what He's trying to do in our lives.

Our journey might be marked by famine, or even conflict with those closest to us but as we are faithful and yielded to God His purposes become fulfilled in us.

We don't always understand all that God is doing. Just like Abraham at this point didn't catch all the eternal aspects of God's plan. But as we obey what God's clearly revealed He continues to guide us.

The last verse in chapter 13 tells us... **Read verse 18**

Abraham moved out according to God's direction and built an altar to the Lord. His direction had been set. On that altar Abraham would offer sacrifices to Jehovah God as a way of worship and testimony to all men that he had nothing in common with the Canaanites and their idolatrous ways.

Lot though, pitches his tent toward Sodom. He got rich down in Egypt and now he longed for more of what the world had to offer and instead of walking in the way of the Lord he ends up walking right into Sodom and in the end Lot losses every thing that is dear to him.

Abraham said "I learned my lesson, I don't want anything to do with the ways of this world." Lot said, "Not me, I want to jump right in with both feet."

Now I realize that Lot wasn't really supposed to be with Abraham in the first place. But I also believe that Abraham's sin in Egypt had a terrible, negative effect on Lot. If Abraham would have stayed in the land instead of going down to Egypt God would have provided and Lot would have seen God's provision.

If Abraham would have continued to walk in faith instead of living in fear Lot would have seen a tremendous demonstration of God's power. There would have been no question about Abraham's changed life. No hypocrisy to take Lot's eyes away from his uncle's God.

Lot was responsible for the way he was and what he did. He could never stand before God to use Abraham as an excuse. But the seeds were still sown. And in the next few chapters of Genesis Abraham goes through plenty more grief because of Lot.

Don't ever think that you can sow sin and disobedience and not reap the results. (And if you think Abraham's reaping painful results wait till you see what Lot reaps.) Those results may not show up that day, or that week, or even that month, but the results will be there, believe me.

If you've trusted Jesus Christ realize that you are forgiven in Him. Understand that your position in Him is perfect. He's covered you with the robe of righteousness. Nothing can separate you from His love.

But, realize that sin stands in the way of God's blessings in your life and that sin brings consequences. Consequences that even the forgiveness of God will not erase.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.
Galatians 6:7

The law of the harvest is "like begets like." It's not the person who gathers that determine the harvest but the person who does the planting.

So don't be deceived. Don't be led astray. God is not mocked.

The word "mocked" is *mukterizo*. Literally *mukterizo* means "to turn up your nose."

And what he's saying is this, you can't turn your nose up at God. You can't treat God with contempt and not pay a price. What ever you plant, is going to determine what you harvest.

If you use your liberty as an occasion to the flesh you are going to reap a bad harvest.

You might fool others but you won't fool God. So don't be deceived. Don't be foolish.

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. I Corinthians 10:11