

OVERCOMING THE DYSFUNCTIONS OF ISRAEL'S PATRIARCHS

III. Handling Conflicts With Relatives Graciously

(Genesis 13:1-18)

I. Introduction

- A. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Israel's patriarchs and their respective wives and families, though blessed of God, were imperfect people who at times made huge mistakes that led to serious marital and family dysfunction.
- B. Thankfully, Romans 15:4 states that we can learn from whatsoever things were written in the Old Testament for our edification, and that includes our learning how to overcome the dysfunctions of Israel's patriarchs.
- C. We view Genesis 13:1-18 on the need to handle conflicts with relatives with grace for insight and application:

II. Handling Conflicts With Relatives Graciously, Genesis 13:1-18.

- A. When Abram returned from Egypt, his nephew Lot returned with him, indicating that both of them had gone into Egypt and were returning to the Negev wilderness area in southern Canaan, Genesis 13:1 NIV.
- B. Abram was now very wealthy in livestock, silver and gold, Genesis 13:2.
- C. From the Negev in area, Abram and Lot moved from place to place northward until they arrived at Bethel where Abram had previously built an altar and called on God's name, Genesis 13:4a. Renewing his faith in God's promise that the Lord would give him the land of Canaan, Abram repeated that deed, building a second altar at Bethel and again calling on the Lord in worship, Genesis 13:4b with Genesis 12:7-8.
- D. This renewal of faith in the Lord set the stage for the incident that would follow (as follows):
 - 1. A problem then arose over the limitations of the land for the possessions of Abram and Lot, Gen. 13:5-7:
 - a. The Canaanites and Perizzites then possessed the land (Genesis 13:7b), holding "the best parts, so" the servants of Abram and Lot "had to scarp for water and food in the rest" (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 50).
 - b. Lot like Abram had flocks, herds and tents, and since they both had to scarp for their water and food besides what the Canaanites and Perizzites owned, the land could not contain them both, Genesis 13:5-6.
 - c. Consequently, quarreling erupted between the herdsmen of Abram and the herdsmen of Lot, Gen. 13:7.
 - 2. Abram had just renewed his faith in God at Bethel (Gen. 13:4b), trusting God's promise to give him the land, so he knew God in time would remove the Canaanites and Perizzites and even Lot! (cf. Gen. 12:7-8)
 - 3. However, Abram knew that preserving a good relationship with his nephew was a worthwhile goal, so he tried to end the quarreling of their herdsmen, Genesis 13:8. To that end, Abram graciously gave Lot the choice of moving north (to the "left") or south (to the "right") and Abram would go the other way, parting so as to make room for them both in the land, Genesis 13:9. Abram would trust God to work out the details of getting all of the land to him, but he would not himself forcibly try to acquire possession of it all.
 - 4. Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan (the "front") was well watered, like God's garden of Eden or Egypt that enjoyed periodic flooding of the Nile, Genesis 13:10a NIV. Moses, the author of Genesis, noted that this was before God had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, preparing the reader with the insight that the land that Lot chose had a short-lived desirability, Genesis 13:10b!
 - 5. Accordingly, Lot chose the whole plain of the Jordan Valley for himself, and he moved out to the east where he thought he would have plenty of provisions for his herds, Genesis 13:11. Lot thus lived among the cities of the Jordan Valley and he even pitched his tents in the vicinity of Sodom, a very wicked city, while Abram remained in the land of Canaan, Genesis 13:12-13.
- E. God responded to Abram's gracious action toward Lot by rewarding Abram, Genesis 13:14-18:
 - 1. After Lot left, the Lord told Abram to look around like Lot had looked around and see the land to the north, the south, the east – where Lot had gone – and the west, that all the land he could see from where he stood at Bethel would be the land God would **forever** give to him and his descendants, Genesis 13:14-15.
 - 2. God said He would make Abram's offspring as countless as the dust particles of the earth, Genesis 13:16.
 - 3. The Lord then had Abram walk through the length and width of the land that He would give him, v. 17.
 - 4. Abram responded by moving south to the large trees of Mamre near Hebron where he pitched his tents and built another altar of worship to the Lord, Genesis 13:18.

Lesson: By trusting God's Word to give him the land of Canaan, Abram kindly let his nephew Lot choose where he wanted live in it to avoid conflict with Abram's herdsmen, so God pledged to give Abram ALL the land of Canaan.

Application: May we view resolving conflicts with our relatives as a reasonable and valuable goal, for we can offer to be gracious in doing so since God can deal with any short-term costs that such graciousness might require of us.