

OPEN HAND ABRAHAM

Genesis 13-14

God promised Abram a people in a place under His blessing and rule with a purpose of bearing witness to God before all nations (Genesis 12.1-3).

Abram behaved open-handedly, trusting God to deliver the results. We can see in this instance that Abram's way of operating in the world was different from that of his nephew, Lot.

Lot acted on the desires of the flesh

Abram and Lot agreed to divide the land. In an act of open-handedness, Abram allowed Lot to choose his plot (Genesis 13.8-9).

The sequence of seeing, desiring, and taking appears often in Scripture. We encountered this with Eve who saw, desired, and took the fruit (Genesis 3.6). We read of the same sequence in Achan's act of plunder (Joshua 7.20-21). Likewise, David saw, desired, and took Bathsheba outside God's design (2 Samuel 11.2-5).

Does Lot's desire for this land show us a man-made attempt to return to an Edenic state (Genesis 13.10)? Does he reason, "If I can get this land, then all will be well"? We have a case of idolatry.

We read that Lot goes east, which has been indicative of moving away from God (Genesis 13.11). He settles in Sodom, a place of iniquity (Genesis 13.10b, 12-13). Sodom then finds itself at the center of the first recorded war in history (Genesis 14.1-12).

Lot's shallow choices led him to a place of strife, poverty, and enslavement (Genesis 14.11-12). We, too, can expect that fleshly, hedonistic actions will lead us to difficult places.

Abram acts out of faith in the promise making God

Abram's openhandedness towards his nephew displays his trust in the God who made promises. There is something guiding Abram's life other than the desires of the flesh (although, as we saw in Genesis 12.13f., the desires of the flesh are always lurking).

After this act of faithful obedience, God reassures Abram of His promises and provides more detail (Genesis 13.14-17). We see the rhythm of God's promises leading to obedience, leading to reassurance in the faith.

Abram's openhandedness towards Lot does not entail passivity. Rather his trust in God moves him to courageously rescue Lot. Whereas Lot used freedom for selfish purposes, Abram used his freedom to serve others.

In another act of openhandedness, Abram rejects the offer to be made rich by the King of Sodom, resolving to trust God for true riches (Genesis 14.22-24).

As Abram rescued Lot, so Christ rescues us

As Abram selflessly rescued Lot from his captivity, so the Lord Jesus came to rescue us from the enslavement of sinful passions (Galatians 5.24).

“Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other” (Galatians 5.16-17).

“For the one who sows in his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life” (Galatians 6.8).

Key Idea: Our faith in Jesus frees us to serve others.

Application Questions:

Why does Lot choose the land that he does? How did this work-out for him?

How does Jesus’ principle that “whoever saves his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” apply to this section of Genesis (Cf. Matthew 16.25)?

What new dimension to Abram’s character do we see in Genesis 14?

How does this passage elucidate what Paul terms the struggle between “flesh” and “Spirit”? Remember who has the Spirit (Cf. Romans 8.9).