

**A Crisis in
Abram's
relationship
with Lot**

• Abram returns north

• Lot and Abraham compete for the same grazing land

**Abram's
greatness**

1. He suggested a friendly consultation

2. He made a friendly and practical appeal

3. He recognised that sometimes friendly separation is the way of love

4. He acted with great generosity

**Lot's
immaturity**

1. He walked by sight not faith

Abram has responded in faith to God's word. But, as we are seeing, there are various obstacles in the way of God's plan being fulfilled. Sarah is childless, the land is occupied, Abram is fallible. Now there arises a new emergency, a crisis in his relationship to Lot.

Abram has travelled from Egypt to the Negev, the dry area in the far south of Canaan ^{㉑1}. Abram is rich, and he and Lot have many herds of sheep and goats, and many employees who work for them ^{㉑2}. Abraham moves his flocks slowly towards the north, eventually reaching Bethel ^{㉑3}, where there is the altar he built earlier. After his misbehaviour in Egypt, he wants to go back to where he began and seek God.

Although God had told Abraham to leave his family ^{㉑1}, Lot also had faith in the promises to Abraham and so he had come with Abraham. God's word that Abraham should act in independence of his family had not been completely followed. Possibly Abraham was waiting for a suitable time. They soon found difficulty in having two small tribes so close together ^{㉑2}. Each group of herdsmen were struggling to make use of the same resources and the result was conflict ^{㉑3}. The grassland was over-grazed; the water was short. It led to strife ^{㉑4}, and to make matters worse the Canaanites were watching ^{㉑5}!

Abram responds with generosity; Lot seems to be rather greedy and self-centred. The life of faith involves learning to live with brothers and sisters, and Abram acts as a man of faith once again.

Consider **Abram's greatness**.

1. **It was Abram who suggested a friendly consultation** ^{㉑1}. Abram took the initiative. When there is some conflict with a brother or a person who is close to us in the Lord the question arises: who should take the initiative? The lazy, unbelieving way is to let the situation drift and get steadily worse. Abraham's way of faith involved boldly taking the initiative and acting to put things right.

2. **Abram made a friendly and practical appeal** ^{㉑1}. It was brotherly relationship which concerned him. 'We are brothers!', he said. The Canaanites were nearby and Abraham and Lot were representing God. The brotherhood that was between them meant a lot to Abraham. Faith involves taking brotherhood with other believers seriously.

3. **Abram recognized that sometimes friendly separation is the way of love**. When peaceful closeness has been proved to be impossible, it is sometimes right to maintain friendliness and love but allow freedom for each side to act separately (see Acts 15:39, and even 1 Corinthians 7:12–15).

4. **Abram acted with great generosity** ^{㉑1}. He says to Lot, 'Take what area seems the best to you. I will be quite happy with the remainder'. It is an act of great generosity and kindness. It is faith that enables Abraham to act in this way. A man of faith believes that God will care for him; he can afford to be generous.

Now consider **Lot's immaturity**.

1. **Lot was governed by sight rather than by faith**. Lot 'looked around' ^{㉑1}. It was not God's promise that affected him but what he could see! The area down by the Dead Sea in the valley of the river Jordan

㉑1 13:1

㉑2 13:2

㉑3 13:3–4

㉑1 12:1

㉑2 13:5

㉑3 13:6

㉑4 13:7

㉑5 13:7b

㉑1 13:8

㉑1 13:8

㉑1 13:9

㉑1 13:10

was 'well watered'; that was the area he wanted! There was great beauty and fertility in the land close to the Dead Sea.

2. He showed no generosity

2. **Lot showed no generosity.** Although Abram was the older man, Lot showed little respect for him. He '*chose for himself*' ^{□1} the best land he could find. There was no hint of any generosity to Abram. Large faith leads to generosity. Small faith leads to meanness.

□1 13:11

3. He was attracted to the nearby cities

3. **Lot was attracted by the nearby cities.** Not only did he move east into the Jordan valley; he also moves southwards towards the cities at its southern tip. This is the second reference to cities in the Old Testament ^{□1}; they arose in the line of Cain. So far they have not seemed to be places of much blessing. Now in Genesis 13:12 their reputation is no better. Lot has little regard for spiritual danger. Lot now had the security of the big nearby town; we shall soon find him living in Sodom ^{□2}. But the men of that place were evil ^{□3}. Lot had no sense of avoiding spiritual danger.

□1 see 4:17

□2 19:1
□3 13:13

• Lot's failure to apply what he believed

Both Abram and Lot were believers in the promises. 2 Peter speaks of '*righteous Lot*'. Yet Abram was a man who applied his faith and worked it out in many areas. Lot was a man who failed to apply what he believed. He had faith in the promises to Abram and yet somehow this faith did not seem to affect his attitude to his kinsman or his attitude to wealth and riches.

• Abram received God's blessing despite his apparent loss

The results of the two approaches to life showed in what happened to Abram. Abram is immediately blessed by God. He may have surrendered some territory for the sake of Lot, but immediately the incident was finished God spoke to Abram ^{□1} and gave him fresh assurance of the promises. There is no sign that God ever dealt very intimately with Lot in this way. Lot gained the world but almost lost his soul; Abram might seem to have lost something but he gained the presence of God as a reward.

□1 Genesis 13:14–18

• Lot's meanness brought him nothing – his territory was eventually destroyed

As for Lot, he soon found that the wonderful territory near the south of the Dead Sea was not as secure as he thought it was. It seemed to him beautiful and well-watered but soon it was invaded by kings from the east. Eventually the area would be destroyed with fire and sulphur from heaven. Today the area of Sodom lies submerged under the waters of the southern end of the Dead Sea, 'well-watered' more than ever! Abram's bold generosity brought him blessing; Lot's meanness brought him nothing.

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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