

A summary of Genesis 13:10-18

- 1. When we are in weakness, do we experience the abundant grace and power of God (Genesis 12:16;13:2-3)?** When Abraham sojourned in Egypt, Pharaoh treated him very well for his wife Sarah's sake. He gave him sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels (12:16). Much of Abraham's riches were given to him by Pharaoh. However, in 13:2, we learn that Abraham was not only rich in livestock, given to him by Pharaoh, but also in silver and gold. Silver and gold are not mentioned among the items given by Pharaoh to Abraham. This may lead us to ask from where Abraham obtained them. Not from Pharaoh. Did he obtain them when he was in Egypt? Did he obtain them before he entered Egypt? Did he possess them when he left Ur of Chaldea? The Bible does not say specifically. If we consider the spiritual significance of silver and gold in the Bible, we will realize that silver, the common form of currency in the ancient world used to carry out commercial transactions, signifies the redemption and salvation of God through Jesus Christ, who died for us in order to redeem (purchase) us back to God. Gold, an element that is unique in that it cannot be created from other elements, signifies the unique, uncreated and divine nature of Christ, that is, God Himself. Most Bible scholars are in agreement concerning this significance. Therefore, we may conclude that Abraham indeed received much livestock and servants from Pharaoh (symbolizing Satan who is the ruler of this world) when he was in Egypt (signifying the world as a system organized by Satan), yet he did not receive silver and gold from Pharaoh. This may indicate that the world never can offer us redemption and salvation, nor can the world ever reveal to us who God is. The world can only offer us material riches. Only God Himself can give us Himself. Yet, it is only when Abraham comes up from Egypt and returns to the place where he had pitched his tent between Bethel and Ai (13:3) that silver and gold are mentioned. Might this not indicate that it was during his period of weakness, of sojourning in the world, that he experienced God's redemption and salvation, thereby causing him to leave Egypt and return to his former location of consecration and heavenly vision? Thus Abraham, fortified with his experience of God and His divine salvation, was able to come out of his weakness and boldly ask his nephew Lot to separate from him. What about us? For example, today, many brothers and sisters, because of the current coronavirus, absent themselves from the church gatherings for fear of contracting the virus. This situation may well continue for several months to come. This situation may cause many to be come spiritually weak. Without the gatherings, we may drift away from the Lord and the church life. We get busy and occupied with many legitimate things. Yet, even in our weakness, we may still experience silver and gold. If we join the Tuesday or Thursday night corporate prayer gathering on skype, we may experience God's salvation and His abundant grace and speaking. The Lord will speak to us. There is no physical risk. God has provided an electronic way for us to remain spiritually nourished and protected, and even to receive more visions and revelations through God's speaking through His word (the Bible) and through His word through brothers and sisters. Do we want God's salvation? Abraham wanted it. Lot did not. Interestingly, Lot also had flocks and herds and tents, like Abraham (13:5), but no silver or gold. He had no personal experience of God. He followed Abraham insofar as he was comfortable and blessed in so doing, yet when the first opportunity arose, he grabbed it and separated, going his own way. If we do not experience the silver and gold, we also may end up like Lot and not grow into Abraham..
- 2. Are we alone, or do we have companions and do we have a service team (13:7-8;14:14)?** Abraham had many herdsmen (men to tend his livestock), no doubt many of them having been acquired in Egypt. Eventually, these men became his "trained men, born in his house" (14:14). This indicates that Abraham was not alone. Often, we like to extoll Abraham's virtues and his faith as an individual, and indeed, the Bible highlights his faith in Hebrews 11. Yet here we see that Abraham did not stand alone, but he had spiritual children (those born in his house, probably young people), whom he shepherded, trained and raised up to become a service team that would fight against Satan (represented by the four kings in chapter 14). Interestingly, Lot also had herdsmen (13:7). Yet when the four kings came together with the five kings to do battle in chapter 14, Lot's herdsmen were unable to protect him and his family from getting captured and swept away by the ravaging armies as plunder. Lot did not have a "service team." Yes, he may have had men who worked for him and even worked with him, but this relationship may perhaps be compared to that of "business partners" and not "spiritual companions." Sometimes, in the church life, we may become zealous because we see other brothers serving or functioning, and we also want to do the same thing. Actually, such a desire is not bad. At least we are affected by something! So we begin to serve, even with saints. However, our serving may be on the plane of "getting the job done." We do not know the saints we serve with. We may not pray that much with them. We are doing a "work" but we are not spiritually companions. If we only "work" for the Lord, Satan will come to destroy or damage our work, and we will easily give up and even leave the church life. Like Lot, we will be defeated and carried off to captivity. That is why anything we propose to do in the church life, or any idea we have to raise the level of life in the church, must be fellowshipped and prayed about. Again, do we attend the corporate prayers? This can be our service team. Let us not serve alone. Let us serve with others, our companions, those who have God in them, and with whom we can be one.

- 3. Do we hear God's speaking and walk through the land alone (by ourselves), or with our service team (Genesis 13:14-17)?** It was only after Abraham had acquired many herdsmen (Lot also acquired many) that he boldly took the step to separate from Lot. These were herdsmen that he had trained and probably was still in the process of training, to develop into a service team in order to respond to God's calling and purpose. Abraham did not want to be encumbered with Lot and all the trappings that came with that. This was his response, not just individually by himself, but with his "service team." Therefore God responded to him by telling him to lift up his eyes and look at the land (13:14) and then to walk in it (13:17), a step he had to take prior to receiving the land from God. Interestingly, such an injunction was addressed to Abraham, but Abraham immediately included his servants and all those in his house. How do we know this? We find the answer in chapter 14, when Lot is captured by the four kings (14:12). Immediately, Abraham and his service team set out to rescue Lot (14:14). They traveled at least 250 km northwards to find Lot, thus walking through the land together. This is a practical example for us of walking in the good land, which represents Christ and the church life. Do we fight for a brother or sister? Are we willing to pay a price, to sacrifice our comfort? Yet this is not an individual, "lone-ranger" heroic effort, but a team labor based on prayer and fellowship. Not only does one brother or sister have God's speaking and God's revelation of the promise, but all the members of the team may be brought into such a revelation. God's speaking to one member may be for the benefit of the whole church. That does not mean that the whole church will necessarily carry out a particular idea or proposal, but everything is fellowshiped and brought before the Lord in prayer before a decision is made. Therefore, the whole service team, not just one or two members, is enjoined to "lift up" their eyes to look at the realm of Christ, at what Christ wants to bring us into. Is it to take care of a few brothers and sisters? Is it to take care of a certain age group? Is it to take care of several neighborhoods? Is it to take care of several cities? The more knit together a service team is through prayer, the higher and more extensively that team can look at the land. Some service teams can look at a whole country and consider the raising up of God's testimony in that country, and still others can look at a continent or several continents. There is no end to how far and how high and how wide we can look. It depends on how great and how real Christ is in me and in every member of the service team. Such a process may cause us to experience the possessing of the land.
- 4. Is our service team growing larger (Genesis 14:14)?** Abraham had 318 trained men. It is not easy to train one brother or sister, let alone 318. Do we realize that younger ones must be raised up? Most of Abraham's men were probably young, much younger than him at any rate. The older saints will grow even older. Some may even pass on to be with the Lord. Who will replace them? Will there be a continuation? If Abraham did not bear children, everything would have been over. Of course, these 318 men were not his physical children but spiritual children. In a sense, they were his continuation, not Isaac his eventual offspring, but still in the principle of Isaac. In other words, Abraham fought to have the experience of raising up "children," even when he was not able to have children. This should be our heart and exercise. Do we have spiritual children? Actually, it is very hard to preach the gospel to strangers and raise them up once they are saved. Many of us would immediately disqualify ourselves and not even consider having "spiritual children." But, like Abraham, we can still exercise. For example, can we take care of the small children in the church life, from 3-7 yrs and 8-12 yrs old? Can we join a service team and even enlarge one already existing, so that young children can be raised up to love the Lord and His church? We must realize that everything is the Lord's doing. All the functioning and operation and companionship of the service team is by the mighty power of God, that is, the Christ in the service team, and not the service team itself.
- 5. Do we live a life of fellowship (Genesis 13:18)?** "Hebron" means fellowship with Christ and the Christ in the saints. Eventually, Abraham, at the end of chapter 13, ended up in Hebron, a portrait of Bethel minus Ai. He was no longer between Bethel (the house of God) and Ai (the world), but purely at Bethel, caring uniquely for God's interests. We often talk about fellowship and we often use the word fellowship. Yet do we actually fellowship? How can we fellowship? How can we have the reality of meaningful fellowship? Often, we like to fellowship verbally. Interestingly, all of God's speaking to us today is through the written word, the Bible, not verbally! God wrote down His speaking (1 Corinthians 10:11). We would never have had God's speaking if God had never written it down (Revelation 1:10-11). Do we write down our testimony? Do we have questions concerning the Bible? Do we write them down? When we write, we solidify our experiences of Christ, and we can come back to them at a later date, especially in times of weakness. Written fellowship is a wonderful way to fellowship. We can consider, evaluate and pray before writing. Such a fellowship is not loose but well thought out and preferably supported by Bible verses. Written fellowship will force us to come to the Bible, to look up verses and passages concerning which we either have questions or experiences, and will even help us to be "in spirit" (Revelation 1:10) and to set our mind on our spirit (Romans 8:6). Such a fellowship will cause us and our service team to grow as we experience God's redemption and salvation (silver) and God's divine nature (gold). Hebron is where we want to live the church life. Hebron is also the place where Abraham and Sarah (23:19;25:9-10), Isaac and Rebekah (49:31), and Jacob (50:13) and Leah (49:31) were buried. In other words, a life spent in "Hebron" will produce many experiences of "silver" and "gold."