

2025-06-01 - The Dust of the Earth - Genesis 12 - 13

Pastor Matt Johnson

Good morning. It's good to see you all. This morning, as we praise the name of Jesus, we are going to remember what He has done as we take communion. In a moment, our elders and deacons will pass out the elements, and if you're a believer, I encourage you to take them and spend some time in prayer, confessing your sins and reflecting on the goodness of what Christ has done. If you're not a believer, I encourage you to let the elements pass by—Scripture commands that this is for those who believe. However, if you don't believe, I want to encourage you to spend time in prayer that the Lord would open your eyes, even now, even this morning, so that you would come to see the great ways that He has worked to bless all humanity, especially His people.

To that end, I will read Ephesians 2:1-10 CSB, and then we will pray:

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you previously lived according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath, as the others were also. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace. He also raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might display the immeasurable riches of His grace through His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do."

On the night when Jesus was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, also, he took the cup after supper and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me."

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we thank you that you so loved the world that, in your sovereign grace, you sent your son. That he came, he lived a perfect life, and he died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. We thank you, Lord, that what we could never do, you sent your son to do. And we thank you that it was a promise that you kept, that that was a promise from the fall. And, Lord, we know, as your word says, that you knew before

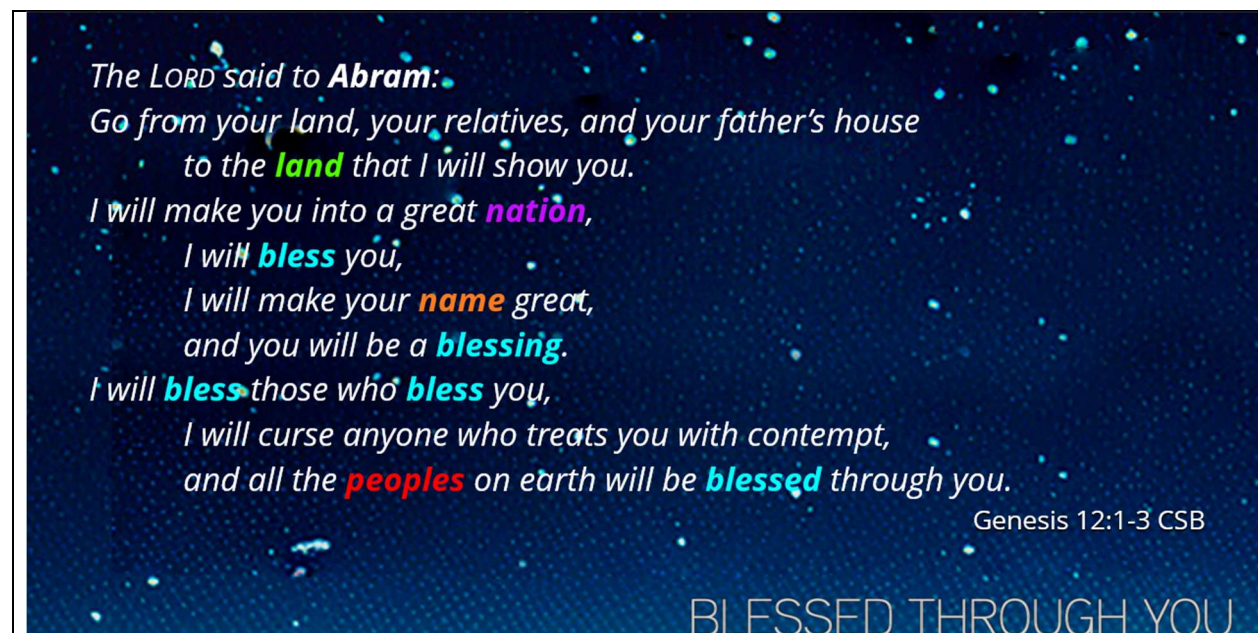
Creation started what would happen. And we thank you that you willingly created us, that we could know you, that we could love you, and that we could see your great glory.

We praise you right now, Lord, as we dig into the word together this morning, as we look at the life of Abram. And, Lord, help us to have eyes to see and ears to hear what your word is saying—how this is not the story of Abraham, the perfect and righteous, but this is the story of you, Lord, the Sovereign God, working through sinful humanity to bring about your promises for your purposes.

We thank you, Lord, that you promised Abraham that you would bless all nations through him. And the mystery of how you would do that was revealed in the work of Christ on the cross. We praise you, Lord, that 2,000 years after his death and resurrection, we are here worshipping to this day. And we thank you that, for 10,000 years and more, for all eternity, we will be worshipping his name because of the work you have done.

We praise you, Lord, and we pray all of this in your holy and precious name. Amen.

Well, good morning. If you've got your Bibles, I want to invite you to open to Genesis Chapter 12.



If you were here last week, we covered verses 1 through 3 of Genesis Chapter 12 and looked at God's promise to Abram. In Genesis 12:1–3, **the Lord said to Abram, "Go out from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on Earth will be blessed through you."**

Now, we looked at these promises last week, and we also talked about Abram. If you remember, he was a 75-year-old, childless man with a wife who was barren—not the ideal person you would start a great nation from in order to bless the world. But we only looked at

half of the problems with why Abraham is unlikely. And today, as we read forward, we're going to see the other half of the problems.

Not only does he lack children, and not only is he 75 years old, but he is from the line of Adam, which means he is a sinful and fallen man, a part of the human race. And today we are going to see how Abram, three different times, seemingly puts the promises of God in peril. Now, of course, he does not put the promises of God in peril because we cannot do that, but we're going to watch as Abram's faith doesn't quite look like what you might picture when you think about him from Sunday school.

But the good news of this passage is that Abram is not the main character. Abram is not the focal point of this passage—God is. And when we see that and when we read through this passage well, we are going to see how God works in his sovereignty, because he has purpose and promise to work through sinful man to bring about his promises despite our sin.

How God's sovereignty provides assurance for His People

It's a wonderful picture of [How God's sovereignty provides assurance for his people](#), and that's what we are looking at today: [how God's sovereignty provides assurance for his people](#).

I don't know about you, but I do. I do know about you. I like saying, "I don't know about you," but that's a lie—I do know about you, because if you are a human, you know how imperfect you are. You may not like to admit it. You may put on a brave and prideful face to show others how perfect you are. But if you are a human, you know, deep down, the depths of your depravity.

David talks about his sin being stuck in the miry clay, stuck, and God had to lift him out. And the reality is, for every human, if things depended on our sovereignty, our own sovereignty and our own power, the end of the story would be failure to the nth degree. But praise the Lord for God's sovereignty, because he works in and through fallen man to bring about his purposes. Praise the Lord that the one human who was able and capable of not sinning, who was fully God and fully man, came and perfectly carried out God's purposes, humbling himself and becoming obedient, even to death on the cross.

As we read our passage today, we should look at Abraham's failures not as an opportunity to bash on Abram but as an opportunity to imagine and see and give praise to God, who weaves together his purposes and plans through humanity's fallen nature. Praise the Lord he does that.

How God's sovereignty provides assurance for His People

God's promises are not dependent on our perfection

We're looking today at **how God's sovereignty provides assurance to his people**, and the first thing we're going to see is that God's promises are not dependent on our perfection.

God's promises are not dependent on our perfection.

So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated, and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the site of Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. (At that time the Canaanites were in the land.)

Genesis 12:4-6 CSB

BLESSED THROUGH YOU

Genesis 12, verse 4: ***So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. He took his wife, Sarah, and his nephew, Lot, and all his possessions and all the people he had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan.***



Now we're going to do a little bit of geography. I know it's small, but it's in your bulletins—thank you. I always like doing this. So from Haran, where he starts—that's in southern Turkey—down to where he ends up, it's about 400 miles. And Abram, this 75-year-old man, with his wife and all of his possessions and also his nephew Lot, traveled a great distance—not by plane or automobile or anything like that.

The way that they would have traveled in that day would have taken a very long time. And in traveling that far, remember last week we talked about leaving behind your father's household, as the oldest male, that would mean he would be leaving behind his inheritance. Abram is leaving his security that he had in his family and trusting in the Lord... Mostly. Why do I say mostly?

So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and **Lot went with him**. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. **He took** his wife, Sarai, **his nephew Lot**, all the possessions they had accumulated, and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the site of Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. (At that time the Canaanites were in the land.)

Genesis 12:4-6 CSB

Lot went with him. He took Lot. And you may say, "Well, what's the big deal? He's his nephew."

So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and **Lot went with him**.

The LORD said to Abram:
Go from your land, your relatives, and your father's house...

Genesis 12:1a CSB

The Lord said to Abram, "Go from your land, your relatives, and your father's house."

Later, in the very passage, Abram is going to say, **"You're my relative, Lot."**

And you may say here, "Well, Matt, he's being a good uncle to Lot because his Lot's father had died." We see that in Genesis 11. Well, God said, **"Go from your land, your relatives, and your father's house."** There's no way to get around this, and as we keep reading, one of the things that we are going to see repeatedly in Genesis 12 through when Lot leaves the picture in Genesis 20-ish is that Lot brings a lot of strife to Abram—a whole lot of strife. And if we look further in Scripture, we're going to see the descendants of Lot bring a whole lot of

strife to the Israelites. Now, there's even beauty in that story because Ruth comes from the line of Lot, and Ruth is in the genealogy of Jesus. And God even redeems what happens with Lot. But the Lord did tell Abram not to bring his relatives—to leave them behind—and Abram brought one, and we will see a lot of pain in his life because of that.

How many times does God call us to do things, to set things aside, to say, "I shouldn't do that, and I know the Lord's calling me not to," and do we hedge? And do we say, "Okay, I'm going to do that," and then we do it halfway?

When I was in college, I really liked video games, but when it got close to finals week, I would feel a conviction—I shouldn't play the video games. But I wouldn't uninstall the games. I would just mash my password in and change my password, and copy and paste it, and delete it. So then, for like two weeks, I wouldn't play the games while I was studying for school things, and then, after school, I'd put it back in. And then, I'd feel a conviction later on. I'd feel like the Lord was saying, "Matt, you sure do waste a lot of time on those games," and I'd be like, "You're right, Lord. I'll hide them from my desktop. You're right, Lord. I'll put my controller up high somewhere." I use this as my example, but how many things do we let distract us that we know the Lord is calling us to put aside, and we just leave them there? Later on, we look back, and we see the pain that could have been avoided if we would have just said, "You know what? I'll take seriously what God has called me to do."

The goal today is not to bash on Abram, but to look practically at how God works in his sovereignty through sinful man.

The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him. From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. He built an altar to the Lord there, and he called on the name of the Lord. Then Abram journeyed by stages to the Negev.

Genesis 12:7-9 CSB

The Lord appeared to Abraham when he got to Shechem and said, "To your offspring I will give this land," and we see it in the passage—it mentions Shechem and Bethel and Ai, and at the end of verse 9,



we see that this is kind of the promised land that God and Abram have talked about. Now we're going to find out later that God had a much bigger picture. But for our passage today, this is what Abram knows. That little green dot there—that's what God has told Abram. ***"This is the land I will show you."*** God hasn't finished telling him, but this is all Abram knows.

How God's sovereignty provides assurance for His people

God's promises are not dependent on our perfection

As we come to the end of this first section, we see that God's promises are not dependent on our perfection. Now you may say, "Matt, why did God fulfill any promises with Abraham if Abram didn't do his end well?" If you read carefully in Genesis 12:1, it doesn't say "if you go." It just says, ***"Go from your land, your relatives, and your father's house."*** It's not a conditional covenant with Abram. It's an "Abram, this is what you should do; here's what I'm going to do." The promises are all only dependent on God in that passage. **God's promises are not dependent on our perfection.** If they were, we would be in trouble. If they were, we would be in more than trouble. There would be no way that we could stand before God ever.

But there's also a beauty here. When we read this—**God's promises are not dependent on our perfection**—because what does the blood of Christ do? It brings us and it covers our sin. It makes us able to stand holy and righteous before God, not because of what we've done, but because of what Christ has done. **God's promises are not dependent on our perfection.**

How God's sovereignty provides assurance for His people

God's promises are not dependent on our perfection

Trust in the totality of what God has called us to do

So what do we need to do with this? We need to **trust in the totality of what God has called us to do.** If Abram at the start of this passage would have taken what God said fully

seriously at God's word, the next passages would have been a lot better. But what's much more important is, as we keep reading, we are going to see how God's promises—he will bring about—because God is sovereign. He is in control. Even as things work inside and outside of people following after God, that doesn't matter. What matters is that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and he is sovereign, and he brings about his purposes and his promises in this world.

We need to trust in the totality of what God has called us to do. We need to faithfully follow. We need to not do what Abram did here. We need to trust that we would follow well. But then, at the same time, we need to recognize that it is God who is the one who works and works through us. Because just like God can work through Abram in this story—and this—he will work through him through all of Genesis, through the next 12 chapters. He can work in us and through us, and he brings about his promises. Not through our perfection, but because he is sovereign, and what he has said he will do. God's promises are not dependent on our perfection.

How God's sovereignty provides assurance for His people

God's promises are not dependent on our perfection
Trust in the totality of what God has called us to do

God's promises are never in peril

And this brings us to the next point: God's promises are never in peril. They're never in danger of not happening. The drama of the passage at hand—it's going to feel like it a couple of times. Abraham brings Lot. By the end of the passage, Abram offers up the promised land to Lot, and you think, "Well, what would happen if Lot took it up?" But God's promises are never in peril, because, of course, God is sovereign. What God has purposed and promised to do, he will do.

There was a famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to stay there for a while because the famine in the land was severe.

Genesis 12:10 CSB

After this, in Genesis 12:10, ***there was a famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to stay there for a while, because the famine in the land was severe.***

When he was about to enter Egypt...

When he was about to enter Egypt—and I want to pause here—

When he was about to enter Egypt...

I will **ble**ss those who **ble**ss you,
I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt,
and all the **peoples** on earth will be **ble**ssed through you.

Genesis 12:3 CSB

we saw in Genesis 12:1-3 God make a promise: "***I will bless those who bless you. I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples***"—and the word 'peoples' there is 'nations'—"on Earth will be blessed through you."

And so now, we are going to see Abram interact with a nation for the first time. Should he go in with boldness, trusting that the God who has said He will bless him and make him a great nation will do what He has said? Yes!

When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife, Sarai, "Look, I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' They will kill me but let you live. Please say you're my sister so it will go well for me because of you, and my life will be spared on your account."

Genesis 12:11-13 CSB

Instead, ***Abram says to his wife, Sarah, "Look, I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife,' and they will kill me but let you live. Please say you are my sister so it will go well for me because of you, and my life will be spared on your account."***

This is weird, right? But it's also practical. Whenever I meet world leaders, I tell them, "Jess say you're my sister." So—three times in Genesis, this same pattern occurs, and in all three instances, we should not see this as a good thing. We shouldn't say, "Look how cunning Abraham is!" Once God said He was going to make him a great nation, Abraham could have walked in and said, "She's my wife. Deal with it." He didn't need to lie. They didn't need to lie at all, but they did.

When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians **sa**w that the woman **wa**s **ve**ry beautiful. Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh, so the woman **wa**s **ta**ken to Pharaoh's household. He treated Abram well because of her, and Abram acquired flocks and herds, male and female donkeys, male and female slaves, and camels.

Genesis 12:14-16 CSB

And it's in this lie that, ***when Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful and believed she was Abraham's sister. Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh, so the woman was taken into Pharaoh's household. He treated Abram well because of her, and Abram acquired flocks and herds, male and female donkeys, male and female slaves, and camels.***

Now, there's an interesting little note in here—"saw," "very beautiful," and "was taken." These go back to Genesis 3, when the woman saw, desired, and took the fruit. These go forward to Joshua, when they enter the promised land. The first sin that happens when the Israelites enter the promised land is that a man sees some of the spoils of war that were for the Lord, he sees, desires them, and takes them. Likewise, David, as he's on the roof, sees Uriah's wife, desires her, and takes her. This is the pattern of sin that plays out many times in Scripture.

But it's important to note, as we read this, that in this day, this would have been expected. If she was an unmarried woman, Pharaoh could take her—not that it was good, but the people wouldn't have realized they were breaking anything, since they didn't know that Abram and she were married.

But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues because of Abram's wife, Sarai. So Pharaoh sent for Abram and said, "What have you done to me? Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She's my sister,' so that I took her as my wife? Now, here is your wife. Take her and go!" Then Pharaoh gave his men orders about him, and they sent him away with his wife and all he had.

Genesis 12:17-20 CSB

And what we see is that the ***Lord strikes Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues because of Abraham's wife. So Pharaoh sent for Abram and said, "What have you done to me? Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She's my sister,' so that I took her as my wife? Now, here is your wife—take her and go." Then Pharaoh gave his men orders about him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.***

Now, this is a weird story. But at the end of it, God is protecting what He has promised. When God told Abram, "I will make you a great nation," in Genesis 12:1–3, that promise was built on things God said in Genesis 2—***where a man will leave his family, a woman will leave hers, and the two will become one.*** And if this had played out the way Abram was thinking, he wouldn't have had a wife anymore, and what God had promised to Abram wouldn't come true.

So we see how the Lord acts toward His sovereignty and how He acts to see His promises carried out in a very weird story. And we're going to see it happen two more times in Genesis.

But in the middle of Abram's lack of trust in the Lord, and in the middle of all of this, we also see that the Lord blesses him. Through this, he comes away with more—because God has said, "I'm going to bless you."

How God's sovereignty provides assurance for His people

God's promises are not dependent on our perfection
Trust in the totality of what God has called us to do

God's promises are never in peril

And so we see here that God's promises are never in peril.

Abram isn't going to lose his wife, because that is who God has purposed to give him a child through. Even though Abram is doing his best to mess up the promises, God is going to bring them about. God's promises are never in peril because **God's sovereignty provides assurance for His people**. His sovereignty is always true. He is always in control. If God has said something will happen, it will happen.

This should give us a lot of hope. Because if I looked at my life with myself as the main character, God's promises would very often be in peril—if I had the power to make them so. There are so many times that I fall short. There are so many times that you fall short.

And if our hope is in ourselves, then we lack understanding. It is God's sovereignty that brings about His promises—not ours. **God's promises are never in peril.**

How God's sovereignty provides assurance for His people

God's promises are not dependent on our perfection
Trust in the totality of what God has called us to do

God's promises are never in peril
Recognize the reliability of God's promises

We need to **recognize the reliability of God's promises** because they are built on what He has said and what He will do—God, who is unchanging, perfect, and holy. There is not a word He has spoken in His Word that He will not bring about.

When Jesus told His disciples, **"I will die, and three days later, I will rise,"** in the Gospels—each time He tells them this in Matthew, Mark, and Luke—it becomes a moment where, on the other side of it, they begin to lose faith. But He brings it about.

When Peter says to Jesus, "I will die for You," and Jesus replies, "You will deny Me three times," it happens. What Jesus says will happen does happen. Peter, at that moment, couldn't have said, "No, I won't," and then simply kept his mouth shut all night. No. What God has declared will happen will happen. His promises are never in peril. We need to **recognize the reliability of God's promises**. The Evil One wants us to think—the devil wants us to think, we are not worthy. Just like in the Garden, he twists the truth just a little. We are not worthy. We are not worthy in our own strength. We do not deserve any of the grace we have received—that is why it is grace.

But God, in His sovereignty, has brought about His promises through the work of His Son on the cross and through the work of His Spirit in opening our eyes to the truth of the Gospel. It is His promises that matter, and He will bring them to pass.

God's sovereignty provides assurance for His people. God's promises are not dependent on our perfection. God's promises are never in peril.

How God's sovereignty provides assurance for His people

God's promises are not dependent on our perfection

Trust in the totality of what God has called us to do

God's promises are never in peril

Recognize the reliability of God's promises

God's promises are protected in His providence

And our third point: God's promises are protected in His providence—not just from Pharaoh, but we will see another example as we keep moving forward in Genesis 13.

Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev—he, his wife, and all he had, and Lot with him. Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold. He went by stages from the Negev to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had formerly been, to the site where he had built the altar. And Abram called on the name of the Lord there.

Genesis 13:1-4 CSB

Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev—he, his wife, all he had, and Lot with him. Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.

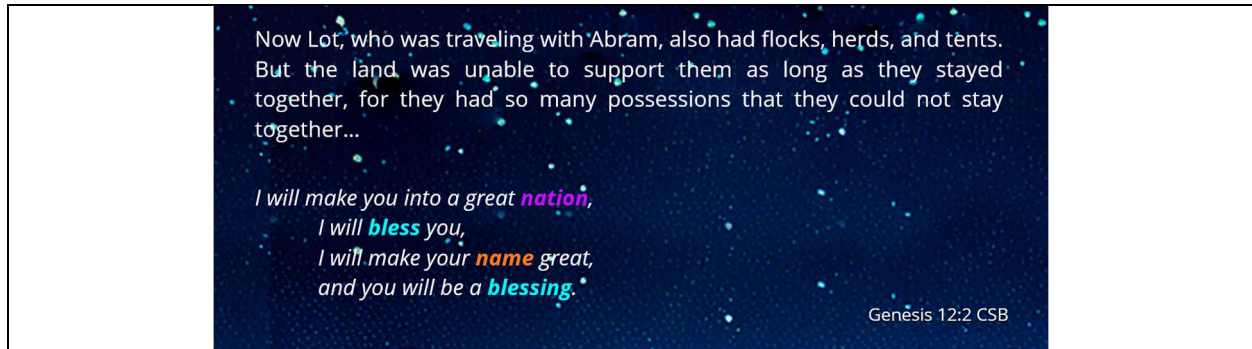
I remember that God said He was going to bless Abram. Abram had traveled to Egypt because of a famine. He leaves Egypt with more than he had before. He leaves a time of famine, a time of hardship, and comes away with greater possessions—because God had said, "I am going to bless you," and so, God blesses him.

He arrives back at the place between Bethel and Ai, at the site where he had built an altar earlier in the chapter, and Abram calls on the name of the Lord there.

Now Lot, who was traveling with Abram, also had flocks, herds, and tents. But the land was unable to support them as long as they stayed together, for they had so many possessions that they could not stay together...

Now, Lot, who was traveling with Abram, also had flocks, herds, and tents, but the land could not support them as long as they stayed together—for they had so many possessions that they could not remain together.

Again, I want to stress this—during a famine, they went to Egypt. They came back from Egypt. They had already been here. But now, the land could not support them on the other side of the famine.



This is a sign of how God blesses. He told Abraham:

***"I will make you into a great nation.
I will bless you.
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing."***

His nephew is blessed by association with him. We see all of this play out in these verses.

Now Lot, who was traveling with Abram, also had flocks, herds, and tents. But the land was unable to support them as long as they stayed together, for they had so many possessions that they could not stay together, and there was quarreling between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. (At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were living in the land.)

Genesis 13:5-7 CSB

They had so much that there was quarreling between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. This was at the time when the Canaanites and Perizzites were living in the land.

So Abram said to Lot, "Please, let's not have quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, since we are relatives. Isn't the whole land before you? Separate from me: if you go to the left, I will go to the right; if you go to the right, I will go to the left."

Genesis 13:8-9 CSB

So Abram said to Lot, "Please, let's not have quarreling between you and me or between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, since we are relatives. If you ever wonder whether you should leave your relatives behind—he even brings it up a little later. ***Since we are relatives, isn't the***

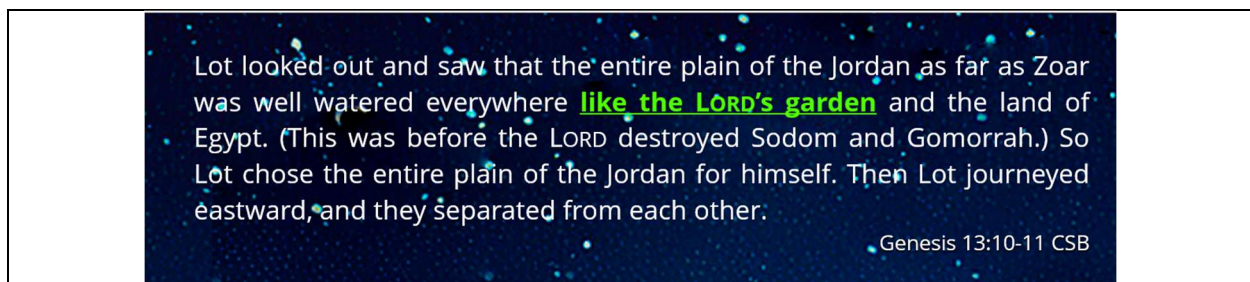
whole land before you? Separate from me. If you go to the left, I will go to the right. If you go to the right, I will go to the left."



And with these words, Abram offers the Promised Land.

Bethel, Ai, and Shechem—to the left—is the land that God has shown Abram. "This is the land I have for you." The land to the right, on the other side of the Jordan, is outside what God has shown Abram to this point. Abram is offering up land that he should not offer up at all if he takes seriously the word of God. If he takes seriously the promise that God has made to him, he should say, "Hey Lot, we're having these quarrels—why don't you head that way?" That would be a much more faithful way to handle this.

Instead of testing God—whether Abram is testing Him in thought or in action—the outcome is that he offers up what God has said He will give to him and his descendants. That area is already messy to this day. But how much messier would it have been if Abram had given the land away in his time?



Lot looked and saw that the entire plain of the Jordan to the right, as far as Zoar, was well-watered everywhere, like the Lord's Garden and the land of Egypt. This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. So Lot chose the entire land of the Jordan for himself. Then Lot journeyed eastward, and they separated from each other.

Abram lived in the land of Canaan, but Lot lived in the cities on the plain and set up his tent near Sodom. (Now the men of Sodom were evil, sinning immensely against the Lord.)

Genesis 13:12-13 CSB

Abram lived in the land of Canaan—the land of promise—but Lot lived in the cities on the plain and set up his tent near Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were evil, sinning immensely against the Lord. We'll get there in about four weeks.

After Lot had separated from him, the Lord said to Abram, “Look from the place where you are. Look north and south, east and west, for I will give you and your offspring forever all the land that you see. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust of the earth, then your offspring could be counted. Get up and walk around the land, through its length and width, for I will give it to you.”

Genesis 13:14-17 CSB

After Lot had separated from him, the Lord said to Abram, "Look—from the place where you are, look north, south, east, and west—for I will give you and your offspring forever all the land that you see. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust of the earth, then your offspring could be counted. Get up and walk around the land—through its length and width—for I will give it to you."

And at the end of this passage, we see that God's promises to Abram are still secure—because they are God's promises.

How God's sovereignty provides assurance for His people

God's promises are not dependent on our perfection

Trust in the totality of what God has called us to do

God's promises are never in peril

Recognize the reliability of God's promises

God's promises are protected in His providence

And that brings us to the end of this: God's promises are protected in His providence.

I wholeheartedly believe Lot could have said, "I'll take the left," because God had promised it. And so, God brought it about. What God has said He will do, He will always bring about.

We see God's sovereignty on display in this passage. Abram doesn't yet fully understand who God is, but by the end of his life—when his name is Abraham, as he is tying up his son, binding him to sacrifice him—at that point, Abram finally begins to truly understand God. And he believes in God, and it is credited to him as righteousness.

But here, when Abram isn't at that point yet—early in his journey—God's promises are protected by God's providence. They are never in peril, and they are not dependent on Abraham or his perfection. Just like today, they are not dependent on us. They are never in peril, and they are protected in His providence.

God will not let a single word that He speaks fall—because He is sovereign. He is in control.

So what do we do with that?

How God's sovereignty provides assurance for His people

God's promises are not dependent on our perfection

Trust in the totality of what God has called us to do

God's promises are never in peril

Recognize the reliability of God's promises

God's promises are protected in His providence

Rest in His Consistent character

We need to [rest in Him and His consistent character](#).

When I read stories in the Old Testament—passages in the Old Testament—I say "stories," but I mean "history," by the way. I say "stories" because it is a narrative form, but this is the history of humanity and how God has revealed Himself.

And when I read passages like this, I always think—how much better would it have been if they had just rested? But how wonderful it is to see how God's plan weaves through, even in the midst of their sin.

But when we rest in Him—when we trust in Him and His promises—things go much better for us.

When we leave sin behind, the Spirit is working in us, helping us transform to look more and more like Christ. We never look back and say, "Look what I missed out on." We rejoice in how God is transforming us.

When we bear fruit, we don't look at the fruit and say, "Well, I wanted something else." No—we have joy, because we are doing what we were created to do.

This passage—and all of Abram's life—shows us this truth. And when we look at the lives of those who seek to faithfully follow, I want to encourage you—because today, we've looked at three failures of Abraham. But if you go to Hebrews Chapter 11, it talks about how Abraham left his father's household. That moment is recorded in the Hall of Fame of Faith in Hebrews 11, just like when he is on the mountain with Isaac.

God sees what we do, and He works for us and in us to bring about righteous deeds—because that is what He, in His sovereignty, does. That is what we read in Ephesians before communion. For those who believe, He brings us to life, and He does good works in us and through us by His grace—not so we can boast, but so we can give glory to Him.

God's sovereignty provides assurance for His people. When we see how He is in control of every moment, we recognize His goodness. We see how He works in and through sinful man—despite us.

And I want to encourage you. If you're out there today thinking, Well, I don't know if He could work in me, there may be things from your past that you never thought you could overcome. There may have been sins that you thought you would always be a slave to, but now, they are no longer a part of your life.

Praise the Lord for what He has done!

I say this about myself, but you've also heard stories of baptisms in the last few weeks—people sharing how God has worked in their lives and how He is still working. He does not stop working.

A lot of times, in the moment, we may not see it. But when we look back, we see how—despite us—He works.

This isn't a call to say, Well, it doesn't matter what I do, He'll work it out. Because how sad would that life be?

We were created in His image to follow Him. In our rebellion, in our sin, we were separated from Him. But through the work of Christ—when Christ died on the cross for our sins and rose again—through God sending His Spirit to us and opening our eyes to the truth of the Gospel, with our sins forgiven, we can live in this life trusting in the sovereign God, who works in and through us in this world.

Looking at the life of Abram should encourage us. As we will see, there is growth in his life. As he better understands who God is—who God claims to be and truly is—Abram takes greater steps of faith. Yes, he still falls short.

When we sing Father Abraham Had Many Sons, we also acknowledge that Abram had many sons in his life—literally. And I don't say that as a joke, but rather to show that every biblical figure had both triumphs and failures. And when we read about him, we see how the complexity of sin and righteousness unfolds.

But praise the Lord that the sovereign God works in and through Abraham, just as He works in and through people today. The promises that God made to Abram come true through the work of Christ. And all the promises God has made in Scripture have either come true or will be fulfilled by the time we reach the new heaven and the new earth.

My encouragement for you as we close, if you are a believer, spend time today praying and thinking: “Do I rest in His sovereignty, or do I trust in my own power?”

So often, we say, I believe everything He has said, but then try to live our own way.

If you are not a believer, I encourage you—even now—to consider all Christ has done. God's promises are fully realized in Christ when He says on the cross, It is finished. He died for our sins. He rose again. He reigns. If we put our trust in Him—not because of our perfection, but because of what He has done—we will spend eternity with the Lord.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we thank You for this day. We thank You, Lord, that as we look at the history of the world, as we look at sinful man—what stands out is Your sovereignty. What stands out is how You fulfill Your promises.

We thank You, Lord, that for all who call upon the name of Your Son, we are saved by His work on the cross. We thank You, Lord, that Your Spirit is at work today. And I pray, Lord, that if anyone here does not know You, even now, You would open their eyes to the truth.

We pray, Lord, that as we leave, we would trust in Your promises, rest in Your truth, and learn from the example of Abram. If there is anything we should set aside to follow You faithfully, Lord, give us the strength to do so. But let us not think we do anything in our own strength. Lord, we pray that we would trust in You—in Your sovereignty and in Your grace.

We praise You, Lord, for the work of Your Son. And it is in His name, the name of Jesus Christ, that we pray. Amen.