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As we prepare to resume our study, looking at this juncture in the story where Abram and Lot separate, they've been together a long time, they've been together for a period of years. Lot has stuck with Abram all the way from Ur to Haran, and from Haran to the Promised Land, and from there down to Egypt, and now back. And yet, at this point, they can no longer co-exist.

On the surface of it, it appears that the strife has to do with the fact that in verse 6 of chapter 13 of Genesis, the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, because their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. But it really goes deeper than this. And this is a clue to us that there's more going on than just the fact that there isn't enough pasturage, or there isn't enough on the land to sustain them.

What has changed from when they were in the land before? What has changed from the earlier years when they were together? Their possessions have increased. Abram is a richer man. Lot is a far richer man through his association with Abram.

And he has accumulated goods of his own. We get the idea before that he was a pretty minor player, but through his association with his uncle Abram, and blessing by association with him, he has gained a great deal of wealth of his own. Lot knows what God has said to Abram.

Lot knows that God has made promises to Abram, and that through him people will be blessed. God has a unique relationship with Abram. He communicates with him.

So you stop and think about Lot for a few minutes. Lot is making a choice here between staying with Abram or sticking with his goods. The reason he's leaving Abram is he can't find enough sustenance for all of these vast flocks and herds that he's got, and all of his servants and so forth.

He's developed this big material wealth, and in order to keep it and to sustain it, he's going to have to move away from Abram. So there's a choice to be made here. He could just sell off some stuff, convert his livestock to gold and silver, or divest it and stay with Abram.

The reason he can't stay with Abram is he is focused on his wealth and his worldly goods, and he wants to continue to increase them and help them to flourish and so forth. So as we think about this, we begin to see, and also as the narrative moves in closer and lets us see the thinking of each of these individuals, that there is an ever-widening gulf in the thinking of these two men. We didn't notice any big difference between Abram and Lot up to this point, but we're starting to see it.

You can see it in the attitude of Abram when he tells his nephew, take whichever direction you want to go, and I'll go the other way. Abram is not worried about whether his flocks and herds will be sustained. Now he's got them, and he's not selling his stuff off to remain with Lot, but he's looking at the land from the standpoint of God's promise.

Abram is beginning to believe God's promise for his daily life. He's made the big decision to move, as we've talked about, but now he's beginning to make application of it in daily life. And he says, you know, I don't have to necessarily head for the well-watered plains for God to fulfill His promise.

God can fulfill His promise no matter where I am. So if you go to the right, I'll go to the left, vice versa. And so we're starting to see that there's a difference.

Abram trusts God. Abram's beginning to live out that faith and live out his belief in the reality of God's promise. Lot doesn't see it.

Lot is focused on sheep and goats and grass and shepherds and goat herds and so forth. So when you see Lot in verse 10, as we saw before the break, Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well-watered everywhere. Once we see that flag of the east in verse 11, and we see Lot lifting up his eyes and looking, we know that this harks back to a pattern of thinking that does not reflect faith.

We saw it with Eve. We've seen it with the sons of God in chapter 6 and so forth. So this brings us to consider for a moment, when and how do we separate? It's been called the doctrine of separation.

Abram has decided that he needs to separate. He's the one in verse 8 that speaks up and says, we need to do something about this. It's creating strife.

He goes to Lot and says, let there be no strife between us. This is one of our first principles of separation. Because think about it, all of us at one time or another have probably felt like we needed to get away from someone else who is a fellow member of the body of Christ, may even be a member of our family, our inner circle of family or friends or whatever, someone who's close to us.

And events take place and we suddenly think, I think I've got to get away. And then we wonder if we're just wimping out, if we're not having the patience and the forbearance that the Bible calls for. How do we find the balance in these things? How do we make application? We know on the one hand that there is a time to separate.

Abram does it here and he's doing the right thing. Many other illustrations in the Bible. Paul says that if someone in the early church would not pitch in and work, that they should not eat, that they shouldn't share the table with them.

And it should shame them into a recognition that they aren't living in the way that God

would have them live. And fellow believers are a means of pointing that out by separating. And yet we also have the guidance of Scripture, we have the teaching of Scripture, that the fruit of the Spirit, in addition to love, joy and peace, is long-suffering, forbearance, putting up with evil, doing good to those who hate you and pray for those that spitefully use you.

And love suffers long in 1 Corinthians 13. So how do we know when love has suffered long enough? And rather than continuing a contact that is hurtful and painful and that we're struggling with and it may even be leading us into areas of mental sin and so forth, how do we know when to make this step that Abram makes with Lot? Well, we have one of the keys right here in verse 8 of chapter 13. Abram sees what's been happening in verse 7. There's strife between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen.

So Abram says, Please let there be no strife between you and me. When contact, when an issue rises to the point of strife, it has already created its own sort of division. And, of course, this is going to be a judgment call.

It's going to be a matter of perception on our part when we try to apply this in our own lives. But there are some things that we exercise patience. We apply the Word of God, the principles related to stronger believers and weaker believers.

If we perhaps have been believers for a longer period of time or have had more exposure to the Word of God and have grown and have learned and know some things, you can generally tell when you are in the position of strength and it is your responsibility to put up with someone who is weaker or younger in the faith. And that's where those characteristics that Jesus embodied so well, patience, humility, long-suffering, forgiveness, compassion, when those are called for. We can exercise those things and avoid strife.

If we are causing strife because we are impatient or we lack grace and we lack compassion, that's a problem we have to solve internally first. But there comes a point in some cases where even with all of the forbearance, all of the patience and all of the long-suffering and we win our inner battle and our inner struggle to exhibit and bear the fruit of the Spirit in this situation, even having done that, we've gone the extra mile, we've turned the other cheek, there is still strife. It doesn't seem like there is anything we can do that keeps this situation harmonious.

It always seems to end up in strife. Whenever there is contact, whenever there is time spent, it seems to always end in conflict and it is beyond our control. When we look at ourselves, we say, you know, this was not the result of my failure.

I didn't cause this strife because of a lack of patience. God the Holy Spirit will help us to know when it is our failing and when if we had been able to continue bearing that fruit of the Spirit, things would have been okay. There are times when no matter what you do,

things end up in strife.

It ends up in conflict or it ends up in compromise. We find ourselves backed into a corner and forced to participate in something that we can't countenance, that we can't conscience. We are constantly drawn or forced or manipulated into gossip or into being a part of actions or policies or some other thing that we know doesn't reflect what we believe.

It doesn't reflect the Word of God. It isn't something that we are right in being involved in. But this contact brings us into that.

That's a time to look at separation. If despite our best efforts and despite maintaining self-control and humility and all of these other characteristics, patience and long-suffering, we still find that there is conflict, we find that there is compromise, that's a time to start looking at the basis for separation. You'll also notice here that this separation is not a cutting off.

It's not a pushing away with accusation. It's not a critical step. It's not a judgmental step.

And when I say judgmental, I mean judgmental in the sense that we've studied it in the past, the difference between discerning and judging. You can discern that there's a problem. You can discern that believers are in error.

You can discern that someone is out of line and is just flat out wrong. Some believers have gotten so afraid of judging that they refuse to look at another believer and even discern whether what they're saying or what they're doing is right or wrong. They say, well, I don't want to think about that because that might be judging.

We are called upon to discern. We are commanded to mark those who are in the faith and to mark those who are out of it and to know the difference, to identify the wolves in sheep's clothing, to identify those who do not walk according to the gospel. We're supposed to discern that.

We're commanded and it's needful to discern it. The line is crossed in the judging when we decide that as a result of having made that determination, we are now going to be judge and jury. We're going to inflict a penalty.

We're going to hurt their reputation. We're going to snub them or turn the cold shoulder to them. We're going to hurt them in some way.

We're going to make them feel it somehow that they're wrong. We're going to have that wrongness cost them something. Inflicting a penalty is judging.

That's why it's called judging. It means you're going to be the judge. What does the judge do? He passes sentence.

Many people in the courtroom can look and decide for themselves whether the defendant is guilty or innocent, but the judge passes sentence. He decides what's going to happen when someone is found guilty. That's what we don't want to do.

Notice Abram here. It may be that Lot's men were constantly agitating. Maybe they were the ones that were nervous and were trying to elbow people out of the way for the wells and the good grazing areas and so forth.

Abram doesn't bring any of that up. He says, Abram, I'm sick and tired of your shepherds giving my shepherds a hard time. Remove yourself from me and I don't ever want to see your face again.

He doesn't do it in anger. He doesn't do it in bitterness. He doesn't make an issue out of behavior.

He does it in grace. He does it in love. These are the actions of a loving uncle for a nephew.

You could start here in verse 8 and not even know that there had been a conflict. There's nothing in Abram's words other than his initial statement, let there be no strife between us. I don't want the fact that I am near you to be a cause of strife.

Between my herdsmen and your herdsmen we are brethren. Abram is focusing on the positive side. We're brothers and it's not a good thing for brothers to fight.

The whole land is before you here. Just choose where you want to go and I'll go somewhere else. Abram could not have handled this in a more gracious way.

He makes no accusations. He passes no judgment. He inflicts no penalty.

He gives Lot the first choice of where he wants to go. It's self-sacrificial. It has all of the marks of a man of faith.

Abram knows that God will take care of him. Abram is applying the promises of God but yet he is also applying the principle of separation. Lot apparently is a believer.

In fact, we know from later events that he's a believer because he's called a righteous man. But Abram has to separate from him because at this point in time Lot is completely occupied with the details of his life, with the circumstances of his riches. So we see the principle here that separation is called for when strife cannot be avoided unless you separate.

Now, if it's a matter of us being weak in faith or weak in the fruit of the Spirit, that's something for us to work on internally. But we come to a point of recognizing, you know, this strife is really not my fault. I have gone the extra mile.

I have not stirred up the hornet's nest here. The hornet's nest just seems to open itself up and fly at me any time I'm near. This tells us that there is a time we can come before God and say, Lord, I really see here that there will be less sin, there will be less occasion for conflict and for the occasion for sin if I just put some distance between myself and this person.

The other thing is, Abram doesn't pack his stuff up in a huff and move off in the middle of the night, does he? He doesn't fail to communicate. He doesn't just cut Lot off without a word and just disappear one night. Lot wakes up in the morning and Abram's campsite is vacant.

Abram goes and talks about this with Lot. He says, look, I don't want there to be a conflict here. You do what you think you need to do.

I'll just step aside. I'll let you go your way and I'll go mine. And he does it in a loving way.

And Lot thinks this is a good deal. Lot doesn't come away feeling like he's been rebuked. He doesn't feel like he's gotten a tongue lashing or that he's been brow beaten or looked down upon by Abram.

He recognizes, like Abram does, that this fighting isn't a good thing. And so he says, great. But Abram does the self-sacrificial thing and Abram goes and talks to Lot.

So A, when strife cannot be avoided, B, it needs to be done in love. It needs to be done self-sacrificially. C, this is something that is made known to the person.

He goes and talks to Lot. Abram goes to Lot. He doesn't sit there and say, well, Lot's in the wrong.

He ought to come to me. He goes to Lot and he initiates the resolution here. He initiates the idea of putting some distance between.

But he does it in a loving way and he tells Lot the reason for it. He says, I don't want there to be strife here. And he gives Lot the choice.

Abram does not move away from Lot. Abram gives Lot the freedom to move away. There is the patriarchal system here and Lot, standing in the position of a son to Abram, because Abram has no sons and Lot has no father, is duty-bound to stick with Abram.

And Abram releases him from that sense of obligation. He says, you go ahead and go where you think you need to go. So this is a compassionate action.

It's a loving action. It's self-sacrificial. It reflects faith.

Everything about what Abram does is commendable. Hopefully when we find ourselves in a situation like this and we decide on a course of action, we can stop and meditate

long enough to ensure that our action is commendable, that our motives are good, that we are taking the high road of faith, the high road of love, of self-sacrifice, that we're not embarrassed or too angry to go and talk to someone in a calm way and to give them the freedom to make their choice. This is the same pattern, by the way, that you find in the New Testament when Paul talks about the person in a marriage who comes to faith in Christ and the spouse does not.

He talks to the women and to the men and he says, if you find yourself married to someone who does not want to follow the faith, but if they're not upset about it, stay with them. Who knows that by your good conduct they may be won over to Christ. Paul tells them that their household will be blessed by God as though they were all believers.

Blessing by association, just as Lot has received here from Abram. Even though he's not the man of faith that Abram is. And Paul also says over there in Corinthians that if the spouse that's not a believer wants to depart, give them the freedom to go.

He doesn't say if you're married to an unbeliever, you pack up and leave. He says if they're willing to remain with you, then try to make a go of it. Who knows, they may be won.

So you see the same pattern here that the believer should take the part of seeking to preserve the relationship. If it can't be preserved, if it constantly leads to strife, the believer is not the one that packs up and leaves. The believer gives the freedom to the other person to depart if they want to.

Now there are situations where this principle may not be uppermost. I am reminded from time to time of instances where there is a wife who is being physically abused by a husband and so forth. And if that husband is an unbeliever, the wife is a believer.

Obviously it isn't going to make sense to say, well, stay there and give the husband the freedom to leave. That doesn't apply in a situation like that. You have a responsibility to keep your physical body from being beaten up on by someone else.

But I think in general the pattern is clear that this is not packing up and leaving in a huff. It isn't inflicting a penalty on someone else. So we have a wonderful example here, a wonderful illustration of how the doctrine of separation is applied in real life on the part of Abram.

And it's also wonderful evidence of his recovery from living the life of fear to living the life of faith in the transition from chapter 12 to chapter 13. So we find here that Abram has recovered and now his thinking is different. Lot really here is thinking like Abram did in the last chapter.

Abram is the one in chapter 12 that looked around and saw that there was a famine and decided he needed to move to a more prosperous area. Now Lot is following in that same

pattern of thinking. He's deciding that he can't remain where he is and that he needs to move.

And so you may recall our points of summary from Abram's failure in chapter 12. Abram put faith in his own judgment and in his own solution. Remember that? Now Abram is putting his faith in God's promise.

Lot is the one putting his faith in his own judgment and his own solution. He's the one lifting up his eyes and seeing the plain of Jordan. It doesn't say, and behold, Lot went to the altar of the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord and said, Lord, where would you have me go? I don't want to fight with my uncle.

This is something he could easily have done. But he lifts up his eyes. He looks.

He does the same thing that Eve did at the tree, the same thing that the sons of God did in chapter 6, the same thing that apparently happened in chapter 10 of Genesis with Noah's wife. And so the difference in perspective has already separated Abram and Lot. The difference in thinking, the difference in focus and perspective of life.

Even when they're physically together, they have already parted ways here because Abram is really starting to live the life of faith. And we're going to see him continue in that pattern here for several more chapters. Lot, on the other hand, thinks that this plain of Sodom and Gomorrah, isn't it odd? You look at that language in verse 10 of chapter 13.

Lot lifted up his eyes and looked at the plain of Jordan. It was well watered like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. And you have this weird comparison that the plain of Sodom and Gomorrah, which is the symbol of complete depravity and sin in the Bible, and to him it looks like the garden of the Lord.

He thinks Sodom and Gomorrah looks like the garden of Eden. This is what happens when we look at things from our own perspective, with our human short-sightedness and not from the perspective of faith. And this is the kind of mistake that we can make.

And this is how we get started journeying toward the East. Second thing I want to point out before we go forward to see what happens to Lot is, you remember what happened to Abram when he made this mistake. He went down to Egypt and God made sure that Abram was confronted.

He didn't just live a comfortable time down there in the land of Egypt. God made sure that Pharaoh was plagued and that the situation was untenable for Abram. He couldn't stay down there living the life of fear.

God didn't appear to Abram because Abram is not listening to God at this point. God works through Abram's circumstances. God plagues the Egyptians.

God makes sure that Pharaoh comes to find out why it is that he's getting plagued, and that's that he's brought Sarai down into his harem. And he, Pharaoh, goes and confronts Abram and expels him from the land. So essentially, God, working through circumstances, ensures that Abram is expelled from Egypt.

We're going to see here before long that Lot is going to be expelled from Sodom. And if you think about it, there are many places in the Bible where this pattern is followed. You think about men of faith who go down the wrong road, and God confronts them.

God sees to it that circumstances prevent them from continuing down that road. Why does He do that? There are other times when it seems that people persist in their perverse ways, and they just go all the way to destruction. King Saul would be an example of that.

King Ahab would be an example of that. And yet you have others who are not. One of the most obvious examples of this principle is right after Israel goes into the land, they march around Jericho seven times, the walls come tumbling down, and what a great victory.

They go on to the next town, and they're defeated. They go to Ai, it's a smaller, less fortified city, and they suffer a humiliating defeat. A couple of hundred men are slain, and they come back with their tails between their legs to Joshua, and they say, we don't know what happened.

We've suffered a defeat, and now our confidence is gone. We don't know if we can take this land or not. This little village whipped our army and sent us back here in disarray.

God made sure that they lost the first battle of Ai. Why? There was sin in the camp. Achan had stolen, had violated the commandment of God.

There was sin in the camp, and God made sure that Israel knew it. God didn't appear to Joshua. He didn't send him a prophet, didn't send him a vision, didn't come down in the pillar of fire.

Circumstances told Israel that something was wrong, and they were rebuffed from where they should have been going or where they wanted to go. Once the sin was identified and eradicated, they went back and won the victory they were supposed to win. You find that story over in Joshua 7. A second example of this, and probably one that has occurred to your mind if you're thinking about this, if you think about someone who started down a road and wasn't able to get down the road, who do you think of? You think of Balaam riding the donkey.

That story is over in Numbers 22. That's quite a curious story because God gives Balaam permission to go down the road. Turn just for a moment to Numbers 22, because there's a strong parallel here to Abram's experience that we've just seen.

You remember Balak, the son of Zippor that saw Israel coming, and they send messengers over to, of course, Balak is the king of Moab, and he's afraid that Israel is going to overrun him, and he wants to do something in the realm of the supernatural to stop these encroachers. So he goes and sends to Balaam and wants him to come and curse Israel and put a hex on them so that they won't be able to defeat his armies. So in verse 6 of Numbers 22, the message that Balak sends over to Balaam, he says, these people have come from Egypt.

They cover the face of the earth, and they're settling next to me. Therefore, please come at once. Curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me.

Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land if you curse them. That's basically what he says. So they go and they find Balaam, and he goes through a rigmarole.

They lodge there, and he'll let them know. He goes and checks with God, and God says in verse 12, you shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people because they are blessed.

So Balaam gives them that answer in verse 13. Verse 14, they go back and tell the king, and the king sends them back with more presents and greater promises and so forth. And so he says in verse 19, well, stay here tonight.

I'll check with the Lord and see if I can come curse them. Verse 20, God came to Balaam at night and said to him, if the men come to call you, rise and go with them. So God says, okay, if they call you and say come, you go ahead and go with them, but only speak the word that I speak to you.

That's what you shall do. So verse 21, Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab. Well, he just got permission, didn't he, from God? But look at verse 22, God's anger was aroused because he went.

Now this seems kind of puzzling. God gave him the permission to go, but when he goes, God gets angry. And you have the episode with the angel standing in the way that Balaam can't see, but the donkey can see.

He tries a couple of times to go through, and he starts whipping the donkey, and the donkey crushes his foot, and he's about ready to kill the donkey, and the donkey speaks. Well, what's the matter here? Balaam is going down a road. There is a way that seemeth right to a man.

He's gotten permission from God to go, but God is stopping him from going. Why? The same reason that when Israel went to attack Ai, they were stopped. Because even though they're going to the right place and doing the right thing, there's sin in the camp.

There's sin in the heart. Balaam is going for the wrong reasons. Balaam has been itching for an excuse to go because of all these wealth and honor promises that Balak has made to him.

He's not going because he wants to do the word of the Lord. He's not going because he's wanting to get there and deliver the word of God, like God told him in verse 20. He's thinking, wow, God's given me permission to rake in this big jackpot, and God's anger is aroused at him for going.

Even though he's going to the right place and doing what God gave him permission to do, it's what's in his heart that arouses the anger of God. There's sin in the camp. There's sin in his heart.

And that's why the angel confronts him. You go down to verse 29. Balaam says to the donkey, after the donkey says, What have I done to you that you've struck me these three times? Balaam said to the donkey, Because you have abused me, I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you.

The donkey said to Balaam, Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden ever since I became yours to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you? He says, No. Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand. He bowed his head and fell flat on his face.

The angel of the Lord said to him, Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Now notice, once again, this is evidence. The anger of Balaam, the impatience of Balaam, these are external manifestations of his attitude of the heart. He's impatient.

He's selfish. This is not the action of a compassionate, love, joy, peace, patience-filled man. Instead of stopping and thinking, This faithful donkey is certainly acting strange.

I wonder what's the matter with it. He is so anxious to get there and rake in this money that he beats his faithful friend. And God gives it a voice to speak.

And this is the question that the angel of the Lord asks him in verse 32. And that gets overlooked a lot, but that's a really important question. Because even after the donkey asks, now the angel of the Lord asks him.

The angel of the Lord says, Why have you struck your donkey these three times? If Balaam would stop and think about the answer to that question, Why am I beating this perfectly good, obedient, faithful animal that I've had all these years? Why am I beating it? Because my heart is all messed up. I'm filled with sin. The angel says, Behold, I have come out to stand against you because your way is perverse before me.

It's so important. Because God told him, If the men come, go with them and speak the word I give you. And he's going.

On the outside, it looks like he's doing the right thing. But the angel says, Your way is perverse before the Lord. And I have come out to stand against you with this sword.

The donkey saw me and turned aside from me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely I would also have killed you by now and let her live. Balaam would have suffered death for going and doing what God told him to do with a wrong heart.

Not operating in faith. Not operating in humility. Not looking at life from the divine perspective.

Even though he's doing the right thing, he's doing it in a wrong way. And it would have cost him his life had the donkey not turned. Balaam recognizes this in verse 34 and says to the angel of the Lord, I have sinned.

I did not know you stood in the way against me. Now, therefore, if it displeases you, I will turn back. Now, Balaam is starting to realize he's getting his priorities and his perspective back in order.

He says, If it displeases you for me to go, I won't go. Now, Balaam has lost interest in the wealth side of things. Because he's face to face with the glory of God here in the person of the angel.

But the angel tells him the same thing in verse 35 that he told him back in verse 20. Go with the men, but only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak. That's his mission.

Speak the word of the Lord. That wasn't in Balaam's heart when he saddled up the donkey that morning. But it's certainly in his heart now.

And because of this, God is going to be able to use Balaam to record the great oracles that you find in chapter 23 and 24 of Numbers that are inspired Scripture. Because now his heart is right, and God is going to use him. I mean, you think about it.

This unknown man, off in the wilds there, not even an Israelite, because he's now right in his attitude to the Lord, is going to speak words that are going to prophesy the coming of Messiah. His words are going to be recorded for eternity in the pages of Scripture and his life because he responds to the rebuke of the Lord. There are other people who do not respond.

Some of those people who don't respond, God isn't even going to bother with because he can rebuke, he can stop, he can discipline, he can do everything. And he says all day long, I've held out my hands to disobedient and stiff-necked people, and they never turn. But he tells Israel over and over again, turn you at my reproof, for why should you die, O house of Israel? Israel, as a nation of believers, didn't have the heart that Balaam has, who isn't even an Israelite, of turning at the reproof of the Lord.

But the men of faith and the men who stand out in the Old Testament Scriptures are those who, when God rebukes, when God rebuffs, when God disciplines, their heart responds. That's what's happened with Abram. That's why Abram does such a great job here in this issue with Lot.

Abram says, I know where I need to be, and he heads straight north to Bethel. He says, I know that I can go anywhere in this land and God will bless me. Lot, you take whatever you think is the greatest piece of ground, God will take care of me.

He does it graciously, he does it gracefully, and yet at the same time he separates so that he's no longer creating strife and participating in strife with a brother. And it's a wonderful illustration for us. Of course, another example of this, if you just think about it in your own mind, is Jonah.

Jonah is a prophet of God. Jonah receives the call from God. Jonah, go to Nineveh and tell them in 40 days they're going to be destroyed.

And, you know, in many songs and retellings of that story, Jonah decides he's going to go the other way and he gets on the ship bound for Tarshish. It's very interesting because as near as anybody can tell, Tarshish is Tarsus, the hometown of Saul. And who knows what would have happened if Jonah had actually reached his destination.

But Jonah tries to go the other way and disregard the word of the Lord. What happens? Does God come in a blinding flash or a pillar or a vision or something to Jonah? He doesn't. He works through circumstances.

And he absolutely prevents Jonah from carrying out his desire, just like Balaam, just like Abram, just like many others in the Bible. And Jonah recognizes that great storm on the sea as the rebuke of God. And he tells the sailors, there's nothing that's going to stop this storm and the only way to save yourself is to throw me overboard.

There's another little doctrine of separation there. And so they cast the prophet over the side and immediately the sea is calmed and, of course, he's swallowed by the great fish. And through this experience you get the prayer of Jonah there in the interim period when he's in the belly of the fish.

And when he is spewed out onto dry land, his perspective is kind of like Balaam's. His perspective is kind of like Abram's. Men who respond to the rebuke of God.

The Lord chastens those whom he loves and he scourges every son whom he receives. It's what we do with that rebuke that counts. So we have several examples here.

And it's important for us as we come back now to Genesis chapter 13 to see the difference between Abram and Lot. The difference in thinking. Because this is what's going to help us understand everything that happens subsequently.

For example, when we see in verse 13 that Lot has gone to live with the men of Sodom who are exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord. This should have been a factor in Lot's choice. Ideally, he would have looked at that and said, Boy, here's some great water holes, some great wells.

This plain of the Jordan is lush and verdant and filled with all this great pasturage. But I'm going to have to rub elbows with people who despise and disregard the Lord who are exceedingly wicked and sinful. He has left his uncle who has the covenant promises of God to whom God appears and speaks to go live with the men of Sodom.

But this isn't a factor in his thinking. He's thinking strictly in terms of circumstances. But look at verse 14.

After this takes place, and the Bible points it out, the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him. This is a great victory for Abram. It's a great step of faith for Abram.

And God is pleased. And God comes to Abram after he separates from Lot. And he says, lift up your eyes now and look from the place where you are northward, southward, eastward, and westward.

For all the land which you see, I will give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.

What a wonderful reassurance. This is like a big hearty pat on the back from the Lord God for Abram. Because Abram has responded.

Abram's caught the truth here. And Abram can walk anywhere. He doesn't have to fear famine.

He doesn't have to fear running out of pasture, running out of water. God says, go wherever you want. Arise.

Walk up and down in it. It's yours. I give it to you and your descendants forever.

And so in verse 18, Abram does exactly that. He moved his tent and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord. What a contrast here between the thinking of Abram and the thinking of Lot.

What's the significance of the terebinth trees of Mamre? That's what we'll see when we pick up our study next week. We'll resume tracing the course of the separate lives now of Abram and Lot. But let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for the truth of your word and the wonderful ways that you communicated to us, not only in the teaching portions and the exhortatory portions of

Scripture, but also in the wonderful stories and narrative that illustrate so effectively for us the principles that you would have us live by. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will take these things and help us to see the application in our own circumstances and in our own lives so that we too can be those who walk and live by faith, who respond to the correction and rebuke and instruction in righteousness that we receive through your word and through your spirit. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.