

Leaving a Lot to Gain the Rest

by William Carrol

To gain the rest that God has promised, we must be willing to let go of things that hinder our relationship with Him and trust Him implicitly with everything.

Duration: 37:39

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-4, Genesis 13:14-17, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28, Philippians 3:7-8, Hebrews 11:8-10

Topics: "Promises Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on a portion of Scripture from the book of Genesis. The sermon is titled 'Leaving a Lot to Gain the Rest' and focuses on the idea of letting go of things that hinder us from experiencing the supernatural blessings of God. The preacher uses the story of Abraham and Lot to illustrate this concept. As Abraham gets closer to the promise of God, he realizes that Lot's possessions and herdsmen are causing strife and hindering the supernatural blessings. Ultimately, Abraham makes the decision to separate from Lot and move towards the promise of God.

Transcript

Let's pray together. Hallelujah. Jesus, we thank you so much for your wonderful presence.

We thank you that you love us and that it's a love that can be felt. A love that cuts through any kind of darkness or despondency or despair, any kind of deception or disappointment. God, you shine through.

And there is no darkness that can dispel your light. No gloom that can dispel your love. No death that can dispel your life.

We ask that you be glorified in the midst today, oh God. Overpower every lie of the devil, so that only your truth, like a banner, waves. And that only your glory shines forth.

We love you so very much. We ask that you be glorified. In Jesus' holy name we pray.

Amen. Praise the Lord. Amen.

Amen. Glory to God. Glory to God.

This week I was reading in the book of Genesis, actually I think it was last week, and God gave me a word. And it was a portion of Scripture that we'll talk about this morning, that as I was reading the portion

of Scripture, just one sentence just kind of jumped out, if you will, at me. And in essence, the sermon wrote itself.

You know, every now and again you get one of those kind of sermons that you really don't have to write. I mean, it's just there, you know what I mean? But the thing that troubled me over this last 10 days or so was I was trying to find a title for it. Usually the title just comes, and the sermon takes a long time to write.

This time it was the opposite. So I'm going to give you the title, and then I'll explain using the rest of the sermon time to explain what the title means. The title is Leaving a Lot to Gain the Rest.

Leaving a Lot to Gain the Rest. And it's basically a play on words. If you would follow me in your Bibles to the book of Genesis, book of Genesis, beginning at the 12th chapter, Genesis 12, verse 1, we are going to look at the beginning of God's call on the life of Abraham.

Genesis 12, verse 1, beginning to read, Now the Lord had said to Abram, get out of your country from your family and from your father's house to a land that I will show you, and I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

So this is a very important verse. So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Haran.

Then Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all of their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. And now I want you to follow me to the very next chapter, Genesis 13.

Genesis 13, and we will begin reading at verse 14. Genesis 13, 14, and the Lord said to Abram after Lot had separated from him, 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 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. Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees at Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord.

The thing that struck me, that one portion of a sentence that moved me toward this entire thought, was the fact that God had initially given Abraham a promise, given Abraham a blessing. And the blessing was that Abraham and his people would be established in the Canaan land. In other words, they would find a place of rest.

And this rest was a promise that God had made both to Abraham and to his descendants, and it was what motivated them forever. This rest was just beginning in the days of Abraham. Now we know that it wouldn't be ultimately fulfilled until the days of Christ, but it was beginning here.

The promise was beginning here. There was a rest that Abraham was to expect. The problem was, when God told him to leave his father's house, and to leave everything behind, Abraham took Lot with him.

And so God makes a promise to Abraham, and then from the 12th chapter to the 13th chapter, you find that there is a certain amount of difficulty in fulfilling this promise. There is a famine in the land, and not only is there a famine in the land so that they actually have to leave the Canaan land and go into Egypt, but when they get into Egypt, there is an issue where Abraham feels as though he's got to say that his wife is his sister so that he's not killed for her, because they would have wanted her to themselves. And then from there, there is a struggle, and there is a problem with Lot himself.

Both Abraham and Lot are growing in size. They're growing in wealth, and they're growing in their stock, and they're growing in their cattle, and they are at a place where they can't live together anymore. Now Abraham was never supposed to bring Lot with him.

That has to be understood, but Lot was to Abraham what Ishmael would later become, but what Isaac was ultimately supposed to be. Lot was Abraham's nephew, but he was the son of one of Abraham's brothers who had died, and so Abraham basically adopted Lot, and Lot became his son. So that means that everything that belonged to Abraham would have belonged to Lot ultimately, and that means that Lot could have taken the place in the mind of Abraham that only Isaac, the son of the promise, was going to fulfill.

Now we know that Abraham had some problems in that area, because there was one time when he saw Eliezer, one of his servants, as the person that would inherit everything that he had. Another time he prayed to the Lord that Ishmael would be the one that inherited everything that he had, but ultimately speaking, God had a plan. God's plan was that Isaac, the son of the promise, the son that was given to God or given to Abraham rather by God, that was the spiritual as opposed to simply the natural son, this was the one through whom God's blessings would come, and the rest of God, the peace of God, the shalom of God, the established worship and praise of God that was supposed to happen in Abraham's life was going to happen through that son.

But in order for Abraham to allow that, in order for Abraham to actually even recognize that that was something that he needed, he had to leave Lot. So in order for him to enter into his rest, he had to separate from Lot. Now it became more and more clear to him as time progressed, because as I had mentioned, when they traveled together, the Bible says that after a certain amount of time, they found that they could not grow together, because as one attempted to grow, they pushed the other out.

And so likewise, you have a picture of someone who is in a sense standing in the way of the promise of God. Lot was there, and sometimes when God makes us a promise that's way out there somewhere, we can tend to settle for the thing that's right here at arm's distance, the thing that we can touch, the thing that we can hold on to. Sometimes we would rather settle for that than wait for a promise that sometimes seems impossible.

And so Lot was in the way of the Canaan rest. Lot was in the way of the promise of God. Lot was in the way of the life of Isaac.

Lot was in the way. And it wasn't very clear initially, because Abraham, as I mentioned, Abraham saw him as a son. Abraham saw that he was responsible for this man.

He took him under his wing, and there was no problem at first until Abraham began to grow. And as Abraham began to grow, in other words, as the promise began to manifest itself, as God's will began to flourish in his life, he noticed that Lot was growing too. And it's the same as in our lives sometimes, when

God makes us an extraordinary promise, something that we know we ought to hold on to with all of our might.

But sometimes it's out there in the distance, and there are other things that we can actually hold on to, things that we can grasp, things that we can touch, things that are tangible, things that are real. You remember one time Esau and Jacob are in the field, and at a certain point Esau gets tired, he gets famished, he's been working all day, and he says, give me some of that red pottage that you have. Give me some of that soup that you have.

And Jacob says, well, give me your birthright. And of course, Esau says, look, I don't really, what's this birthright thing? It's way out there somewhere. That doesn't mean anything to me.

What matters is what I can touch. What matters is what I can feel. What matters is what can nourish me, what can strengthen me.

And sometimes we're like that. God makes us a promise over here, but there is something else that, in Lot's case, you know, one time he's called Righteous Lot, and the Bible says that he vexes his soul when he lives in Sodom. On the other side, we know that he lived in Sodom.

He chose to live in Sodom, and he was the progenitor of the Ammonites and of the Moabites. So he can, on one side, if we look at it allegorically, he can be a bad influence, or he can be a good influence. But sometimes, whether it's good or bad, there are times when we hold on to something that is standing between us and the supernatural, that is standing between us and the miraculous.

You see, Isaac was going to be supernatural. Isaac was going to be a miracle. Isaac was going to be laughter.

That was his name. That's what his name meant. He was going to be laughter that came from God, and he was going to perpetuate the promise, but he was going to come only by supernatural means.

On the other hand, Lot, at this particular case, and we see the same thing in Ishmael later on, but Lot was somebody that was there. This was the man who didn't have a son. His brother had a son.

His brother died, and he took that son to himself. And now he is beginning to recognize something, that as God is moving me closer and closer to the promise, this thing that I've been holding on to is also trying to grow. It's the same as when a Christian person is moving deeper and deeper into the Lord, and the deeper we try to move into the Lord and into the promise of the Lord and into the supernatural workings of the Lord, that one thing that we hold on to, that thing that we hold on to for security or that thing that we hold on to for familiarity or whatever it is, that thing that we hold on to, you notice it'll start to try and push out the supernatural.

And what was going on with Lot was his cattle began to graze on that which had been designated for Abraham's cattle. And all of a sudden, his herdsmen began to strive with Abraham's herdsmen. And what happened was Abraham recognized something.

I am outgrowing this thing that I've been trying to hold on to. You see, God had told him a long time ago, let it go. God had told him a long time ago, leave your father's house and everything in it, leave it behind.

That means the old ways, the things that you were familiar with, the things that you used to hold on to, but the things that were flesh. He said, let those things go. And Abraham pretty much let everything go but this one thing.

So he holds on to Lot. And now he realizes Lot is not going to go away on his own. And Lot is not going to get smaller and smaller and smaller.

This is something that he must do. It's not something that's simply going to taper off. It's not just something that's going to go away by itself.

This is something that he must actively do. So he confronts Lot. And he says to Lot, and when you first hear it, it sounds like a very meek statement.

Basically, he seems to be saying, you know, we got some troubles here, you know, a little bit of difficulty. I'll tell you what, why don't you survey the land? And you know, if you like it over there in the east, you go east and I'll go west. And if you like it over there in the west, you go west and I'll go east.

And of course, it sounds like it's a meek statement. But if you realize it, if you really look at what he's saying, it's something like this. He is confronting this thing that is drawing from his blessing.

He's confronting this thing that's keeping him from his rest. He's confronting this thing that's keeping him from the supernatural. And he's basically saying this, you got to go.

He said, I don't really care how you go. You know what I mean? You can go this way or you can go that way. I don't really care how you go, but you got to go.

You know what I mean? I mean, that's the way he confronts the situation. You know, the Bible says at a certain point that, you know, sometimes our adversaries will flee from us, you know, seven different ways. And it's sort of like that, you know, he said, I don't really care which exit you take.

You know what I mean? It's like, you know, you know, backstage, you know, back here we got like exit this and exit that and exit the other thing. You know, it's like that kind of a thing. You know, I don't really care how you go, but you got to go.

You know what I mean? And so sometimes we got to, we got to confront things in us or things around us or things, people sometimes that we're holding on to, ideas sometimes that we're holding on to, plans sometimes that we're holding on to, dreams sometimes that we're holding on to. And we have got to confront them because we realize now that they're not going to go away by themselves. You see, they're still going to be grazing on your land and they're still going to be growing and growing and growing.

But you know the scripture where it talks about the house of David and compare the house of David to the house of Saul. And it talks about how David's house grew and grew and grew and Saul's house diminished and diminished and diminished. But there comes a time, as in the case of David and Saul, there comes a time when there's got to be a direct confrontation where we say to that thing that's keeping us away from the supernatural, that thing, that lot that's keeping us away from Isaac, where we simply have to say, you got to go.

If you go this way, fine. If you go that way, fine. Sometimes, you know, the Bible will tell us that certain things leave, you know, only by prayer and fasting, you know what I mean? Sometimes things leave

sometimes because, you know, maybe we're, you know, hooking up with the wrong crowd.

And so we find ourselves getting involved in ministry and hanging out with godly people. And before you know it, we're no longer hanging out over here. Whatever it takes, if it means joining a ministry over here, if it means, you know, moving, you know, from one neighborhood to another, whatever it takes, if you have to confront the person face to face and say, look, this has got to stop, it's not supposed to be this way, whatever it takes.

You see, what was going on here was Abraham had decided that this is over. If it happens this way, that's fine. If it happens that way, that's fine.

But it's got to happen. And so we see this intensity that initially seems like a sort of a meekness, like, you know, survey the land, whichever way you want to go, that's fine. But the bottom line was this.

When we confront the things in our life, the things in our heart, the things that keep us from the supernatural, there has got to be this mindset that says, whatever it takes, whichever way it has to go, it has to go. Now, at a certain point, Abraham recognizes that Lot has got to move on. So, Lot moves on.

And all of a sudden, he hears something that he had heard before, but now he's hearing it in greater detail. He's being reminded of a truth that he already knew to be the case, but it's as though God would come to someone who makes that kind of a sacrifice, who leaves Lot so that they might enter into that rest. They make that kind of sacrifice.

And all of a sudden, God comes, and he begins to reiterate what he's already said. And he begins to rehearse it once again in our hearts and our mind. And he begins to review it again before us.

And then he goes into even greater detail, because basically what he's saying is, I have already begun to establish you, and I've already made a promise to you. And that promise is already in effect. It's already beginning to happen, but there's something that's slowing down the process, something that's causing you to kind of skirt around the mountain a little bit longer than you're supposed to.

But he says, as you begin to let go of that thing, I begin to let you in on the reality that is already yours. You understand, God didn't say, if you let this thing go, then I will bless you. He had already blessed him.

But he said, if you let this thing go, then you can enter into the blessing that's already yours. You see, this is not a works-oriented thing, and it's not a thing where we initiate God's blessing. God chooses to bless.

And then he says, do you choose to receive it? Now, we're at a place where we say, yes, Lord, as Abraham did. I mean, he did pretty much everything that a person has to do. He left his father's house.

I mean, you know the story of Abraham's life. You'll see it as it unfolds. I mean, first, God asks him to let go of Lot.

First, he tells him to leave his father's house entirely. Then he tells him to let go of Lot. Then he tells him to let go of Ishmael.

Then he tells him to lay even Isaac on the altar. This man did everything God asked him to do. He gave it everything that he had.

But there was always, you know, this, as in you and as in me, there's always this tendency to hold on to that one little teddy bear, right? That one little security blanket. We said, like, God, you don't want me to go out into the wilderness without my security blanket. At least let me have that, you know what I mean? It's like, you know, when you read the Peanuts, you know, and you got Linus with that security blanket no matter where he goes.

And it's kind of like that. And every now and again, you'll see that in yourself, and you see it here in Abraham. And God says, look, there is a rest that is defined firstly by God's grace.

And then after that, by our willingness to trust God implicitly with everything that we are. So here Abraham is, and here we are. And God begins to just confront and just probe our hearts.

And he begins to say, what is it that's keeping you from the supernatural? What is it that's keeping you from that rest? And you and I might be able to say, well, Lord, you know what I've given up. You know what I've laid down. You know how I've followed you out into the wilderness and followed you into the Canaan land.

You know how I've warred against the peoples and so on and so forth, and how I've fought against the Sodomites and against the Gamorites and so on and so forth. You know how I did what you called me to do, and so on and so forth, just like Abraham did. Go to the next chapter, and he has to strive against these people just to save Lot's life.

And you know the stories. You understand what's going on there. You can look at your own life, and you could write a story and say what you've done for the glory of God, and how you've done what you could to receive the fullness of his blessing, not out of any strength of yourself and not of any kind of boasting, but it's just a testimony of a life devoted to God.

But sometimes there's that one thing, that one relationship, that one set of ideas, that one set of goals. Like I said, you could look at Lot on one side or the other. Sometimes it can be, you know, the Bible, like I said, Bible calls him Righteous Lot at a certain point.

Bible says that he vexed his soul every day when he was living in Sodom and so on. And on the other side, we see him as somebody who was drawn to Sodom, and we see him as somebody who was the father of the Moabites and the father of the Ammonites, some of the enemies of Israel and so on. So you might have to ask yourself, which Lot are we talking about in your life? Is it a good thing that's just no longer expedient? That's what Paul said, all things are lawful to me, but not everything is expedient.

There comes a time when a thing that might have been good in one day in your life is no longer good. Or is it just a thing that's inherently bad, and it can never be good? But you've been holding on, and then you know you got to let that go. So on this side, like I said, it might be some hopes, it might be some dreams, it might be some life desires and goals where God says, you know what, that's not what I'm calling you to.

It might be some friends, it might be some family, they might not be bad people, but they might not be good influences. On the other side might be some ungodly relationships, or some things that you're doing that you know ain't right. I have a word from God for you this morning.

You're a Christian person. You are already blessed. God is not trying to bargain a blessing.

He has already blessed you. The question is, how deeply are we going to walk in the realm of God's rest? Sometimes we have to give up a lot to gain the rest. Sometimes we have to let go of a thing that we realize is just no longer good, or never was good.

Certainly not what God has for us now. God is trying to bring us to a place of the miraculous, because there are billions of people who need the church to be the church. Billions of people who have no other hope but the church of Jesus Christ.

Now we could hold on to our security blankets and our teddy bears and so on and so forth, but you know what Paul said, you know, when I was a child I did things that children do. That makes sense. When you're a child you hold on to teddy bears and security blankets, but he said, but when I became an adult I put away childish things.

There comes a time in our life where, you know, certainly we must always put away evil things, you understand, but sometimes we have to put away childish things. When I say childish things, I mean some of the things that were not inherently wrong, they just are no longer what we're supposed to do. See, he said, I don't care how you go, but you got to go.

You know what I mean? So one person might say, well for me that means, you know, no longer, you know, watching this television show or that television show, because that's how it affects me. You know, Jesus one time said to one man who was rich, he said, sell everything you have and give to the poor. He didn't say that to every rich man that he met, but he said it to that man, because that's what that man needed.

Sometimes it's people that you're hanging out with. You know you ought not to be hanging out with them. You know every time you talk to them they start gossiping.

You know it. And everybody knows that a gossiping tongue needs a gossiping ear. I mean it's just the way it works.

You know what I mean? It ain't good enough to say, well I don't say anything, I just listen. God speaks to you. We want to move into the realm of the supernatural.

That might mean that, you know, one of your hours that you would ordinarily spend doing this thing that's not inherently bad, now you should spend in prayer, or now you should spend in the Word, because you're older now and a lot more is required of you. As a church we've moved into a different place. I think every time you look at a church community that's healthy, there are these times when you can just sense God's presence in a way that you realize is going to impact the world.

And I spent time praying and talking with our pastor and his heart for this church and his vision for what God has called us to and his confidence in God's life in you is absolutely remarkable. And the things that he sees for us as a community, the impact that we can have all around the world. And you see God has already blessed us, he's already promised this to us.

All we have to do is give up a lot so that we can gain that rest, so that we can enter into God's promise, the promise that hovers over this church and that permeates its texture, that has always done that. But how much more now as we move closer and closer, as we as a body and as we as individual members of this body grow a little older, move a little farther in. I'll say this one last thing and then I close.

There's a promise that hovers over your life, that permeates your person, that saturates who you are. That promise is the Holy Spirit, the promise of God. And he's saying there are places that I want to draw you, things that I want to show you, words that I want to speak to you.

That's what the Lord began to do. He just takes Abraham aside and he says to him what he had already said, but now he says it much clearer, much deeper, goes much further. It's the same thing he says to you.

Look around you, he says, because every place that the sole of your foot touches I'm going to give you. He said look at the stars, see if you can count them. Look at the sand on the seashore, see if you can number that.

That's the kind of impact you're going to have on this world. He said both that. He told him look into the heavens and look on the earth, that's going to be the scope of your impact.

And it's going to keep going, you see. When we're all called home, if this world keeps going on, there will be another generation and another generation and another generation. That's what happens when men and women move in the supernatural.

I want to encourage you today as we pray together. Sometimes a lot is a little too much. Sometimes to enter into that rest we have to let go of a lot.

I want to invite you to pray with me, because I want to move on to the next level. And I want to let go of anything that God points out in my life. If he points a thing out in my life and says let it go, because he's going to bring us a different place, I want to let go.

I want to let go. And I know I can't do that without you. You can't do that without me.

We need each other. We need to strengthen each other. We need to stand side by side with each other.

We need to pray together and believe together. I'm going to ask you in a moment to come to the front of this church, and here's what we're going to do. We're going to stand side by side one with another, reminding each other that we're not alone, reminding each other that we have family.

And then we're going to pray together. We're going to believe God together. A very simple prayer, God, if there's any lot in my life, show me, and then help me to let go.

Let's stand together in the house of the Lord. Praise his holy name. If God is speaking to you and you want to pray, you want to stand side by side with your brothers and your sisters and believe God for a miracle, and come to the front of this auditorium.

My dearly beloved, we'll pray together in the name of the Holy Savior. Amen. Amen.

As I was praying to the Lord and considering what he would have me say to you in closing, I'm reminded of Abraham's statement to Lot, and it was, you know, if you go east, I'm going west, and if you go west, I'm going east. You notice he didn't say, if you go east, you know, I'm going, you know, northeast, and so on and so forth. It was like, I'm going to the opposite extreme.

Certain things have got to be forsaken entirely, and so that there is absolutely no similarity. There's no, we don't give up one thing and bring in its substitute, you know what I mean? We, you know what I mean? We just let go. Now we can't do that unless the blessing is already on us, because we can't do anything in our

own strength.

So the fact that we are blessed suggests that we can do whatever it takes to move deeper into the blessing. The Bible talks about, you know, grace for grace, one grace for another grace, you know, faith on top of faith, glory to glory. So we have been blessed, and now we're just moving into the deeper waters of that blessing.

Believe in God to be glorified in the midst. Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we bless your holy name. We bless you, and we thank you, God.

We thank you for your love, for your tenderness, for your patience. Lord, as we read our Bibles, we see how you deal with men and women, Lord, and we see how lovingly and patiently you deal, Lord. We know that you are a God who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, and if you were to count all of our failures, who could stand? But Lord, we are reminded that we are your people.

We are under your love and under your protection and under your blessing. And so, Lord, we tap into that blessing. We tap into your faithfulness.

We tap into your goodness. We tap into your promise. Who is the Holy Spirit? And we say, Holy Spirit, help me.

Let there be nothing that comes between us. Fulfill your promise in me. Protect me, sometimes even from me.

God, give me the grace to give up a lot so that I may gain the rest. Spirit, we love you. We thank you.

We bless you in Jesus' holy name. Hallelujah.

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