

September 27, 2025

"The Generous Test" – Bobby Warrenburg

Genesis 13

<sup>1</sup> So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. <sup>2</sup> Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.

<sup>3</sup> From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier <sup>4</sup> and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the Lord.

<sup>5</sup> Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. <sup>6</sup> But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. <sup>7</sup> And quarreling arose between Abram's herders and Lot's. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.

<sup>8</sup> So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. <sup>9</sup> Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."

<sup>10</sup> Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) <sup>11</sup> So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: <sup>12</sup> Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. <sup>13</sup> Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.

<sup>14</sup> The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. <sup>15</sup> All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. <sup>16</sup> I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. <sup>17</sup> Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you."

<sup>18</sup> So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the Lord.

1. Look at verses 1-4. List all the specific places mentioned. Why do you think the text is so detailed about Abraham returning to these exact locations?
  - a. What phrase is repeated in verses 3-4 that signals we're coming "full circle"? ("where his tent had been earlier," "where he had first built an altar," "called on the name of the Lord")

2. According to verse 6, what was the stated reason the land couldn't support both Abraham and Lot?
  - a. Look carefully: Does it say the land was inadequate, or something else? What does it mean that "their possessions were so great"?
  - b. Where did these possessions come from? (Look back at Genesis 12:16 and 13:2 if needed)
3. In verses 8-9, what specific offer does Abraham make to Lot?
  - a. What's remarkable about this offer, given that Abraham is the patriarch and Lot is the nephew?
  - b. What does Abraham call Lot in verse 8? Why might this be significant?
4. What does verse 10 tell us about how Lot made his decision?
  - a. What does verse 13 reveal about the land Lot chose?
  - b. What contrast do you see between Abraham's decision-making process and Lot's?
5. After Lot departs, what does God tell Abraham in verses 14-17?
  - a. How is this promise different from or an expansion of earlier promises to Abraham?
  - b. Where does Abraham go in verse 18, and what does he do there?
6. The sermon suggested this quarrel was a "test" for Abraham.
  - a. What was being tested in Abraham's character?
  - b. How could Abraham have responded differently? What would a "failing grade" have looked like?
  - c. The text mentions the land couldn't "lift up" or support them (Hebrew: nasa). Given their possessions came from the Egypt incident, how does this add layers to Abraham's test?
7. Compare Abraham's actions here with his behavior in Egypt (Genesis 12:10-20). What similarities and differences do you notice?
  - a. The sermon mentioned Abraham's practice of building altars (vv. 4, 18). How might regular worship have prepared Abraham for this moment of testing?
  - b. Read James 1:2-4. How does this New Testament passage shed light on what's happening with Abraham?
8. Verses 10-12 contrast where Lot went (toward Sodom, the plain) with where Abraham stayed (Canaan, the hills). What might this geographical difference symbolize?
  - a. After Abraham makes his generous choice, God tells him to "look around" and "walk through the land" (vv. 14-17). What is God reinforcing for Abraham?
9. The sermon suggested Abraham's generosity came from experiencing God's grace after his failure in Egypt.
  - a. How does experiencing undeserved mercy make us more generous toward others?
  - b. Can you think of other biblical examples where someone who received grace became generous? (Consider: the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:21-35, or the woman who anointed Jesus in Luke 7:36-50)
10. Read James 1:2-4 together. Why does James say to "consider it pure joy" when facing trials?
  - a. The sermon said: "Don't be surprised when difficulties come." How does expecting trials change the way we respond to them when they arrive?

- b. What's the difference between expecting trials and having a pessimistic outlook on life?
11. Abraham had a pattern of building altars and calling on the Lord's name. What are your "altars"—the regular practices that orient you toward God?
- a. The sermon emphasized that Abraham wasn't warned ahead of time about this test. He was ready because of ongoing habits. What spiritual disciplines help you stay oriented toward God between the crises?
- b. **Practical question:** If you faced a major test or conflict tomorrow, would your current spiritual rhythms have you prepared? Why or why not?
12. The sermon introduced the concept of "contamination stories" vs. "redemption stories."
- a. Think about a difficult season in your past. How do you typically narrate that story to yourself or others? Does it go from good to bad, or bad to good?
- b. What would it look like to re-tell one of your contamination stories as a redemption story?
- c. How does knowing God is writing the larger story (not you) change the way you view your current trials?
13. Abraham had every "right" to assert his authority and take the best land. Where in your life right now might you be tempted to assert your rights rather than show generous love?
- a. The sermon mentioned "continental divide moments"—small choices that send us in dramatically different directions. Can you identify a continental divide moment you're facing right now?
- **Specific applications:**
    - In a conflict with a family member or roommate
    - With your possessions or finances
    - In a competitive situation at work or school
    - When someone has wronged you
14. The sermon's conclusion emphasized that Jesus passed the ultimate test for us. How does this truth give you freedom when you fail smaller tests?
- a. What's the difference between "it doesn't matter if I fail" and "God won't give up on me when I fail"?

Take a few minutes of silence for personal reflection. Consider journaling responses to one or more of these questions:

1. What trial am I facing right now that God might be using to grow me?
2. What is this trial revealing about me—both good and areas that need growth?
3. Am I blaming circumstances, other people, or God for this difficulty? What might be my part in it?
4. What would the "generous Abraham" response look like in my situation, versus the "self-preserving Abraham" response?

5. What is one specific spiritual practice I need to establish or strengthen to be ready for future tests?