

Main Idea: **By growing us in faith, God frees us from folly, frees us for obedience, and feeds us upon everlasting hope and joy.**

Introduction: Back to the beginning. The second half of chapter 12 had gone poorly, as Abram stumbled spectacularly. But, God was patient with His servant. He has promised to bring the Savior into the world, and He has promised specifically that it would be through Abram that all of families of the earth will be blessed.

By v4, the Lord has brought Abram back not just to where he began physically (between Bethel and Ai) but spiritually (Abram called upon the name of Yahweh). And this was vital, because for the coming crisis, it was necessary for Abram to be convinced in his heart that the Lord is his great hope, and delight with his heart that the Lord is his great joy.

In the contrast between Abram and Lot here, we see several important factors.

1. The Foolishness of Walking by Sight

The foolishness of walking by appearances instead of promises.

Lot “lifts up his eyes and sees” the riches but not the risks. Yes, it looks like Eden (v10), but it behaves like the serpent (v13). Fleshly eyes do not rightly assess the prospects of a situation.

How often we do this, not only with choices, but in assessing our circumstances. We become infatuated with our earthly prosperity, while slouching into a self-centered worldliness. We wrongly chafe against earthly trial that is doing us spiritual good.

2. The Freedom of Walking by Faith

The freedom of walking by promises instead of appearances. Abram doesn’t need the well-irrigated land. He belongs to the God who provides and protects even in physical and spiritual drought—the pain of Egypt has produced the peace of faith.

So, he does not press his interests. He is freed by his faith to give Lot the pick of the land.

How can we love our neighbor as ourselves? How can we even love our enemies, take no revenge of our own? How can we even be slow to speak or slow to become angry? Love to God is the Scriptural fuel for all of these, but faith in God is its foundation. We are freed from seeking our own interests, because the Lord Himself is already doing so!

3. The Feasting of Walking by Faith

a. Feasting upon the future: hope in God

Just as Lot lifted his eyes, so also Abram is told to lift his eyes. But it is especially the eyes of his faith that he must lift, because Abram is instructed to see the future: the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Compare the promise in v15 to the one in 12:7. The difference is that, here, Abram himself is included in this promise (even if he will have to rise again from the dead to receive it!—Heb 11:13-16). It’s not just his seed who will receive the land but Abram himself will receive it. Suddenly the tour in v17 is taking on two meanings: (a) it’s a continual reminder of the greatness of the multitude of the seed promised in v16; (b) it’s a survey of what belongs to him.

How often do you feast upon the future? This does not come naturally to creatures stuck in time. It requires time in the Scripture, reading the promises—learning them and dwelling upon them.

b. Feasting upon the present: enjoying God in worship

But what does faith receive now? Is Christianity really just pie in the sky, by and by? Absolutely not.

Faith may have to wait to receive the fullness of what has been promised, but it already possesses something infinitely greater: we have Him who has promised it. Abram does NOT have to wait to come into the possession of his greatest inheritance. There he is, enjoying God Himself in worship in v18!

This is the joy of Psalm 73, the true joy of Christianity. God Himself, Christ Himself, is the heavenliness of heaven. He is the all-surpassing blessedness of the new heavens and the new earth. And He is ours, not just in the future, but now already. And He has designed His worship to press this into us. Yes, we are commanded to give ourselves to Him in worship, but He has especially designed His worship such that in it, He is the One who gives Himself to us.

Abram merely pitches a tent for himself. Portable. Temporary. The land inheritance comes later. But the lasting structures that he leaves are altars: he enjoys already the very best part of his eternal blessings. Is the worship of God the most enduring fixture in your life?

Conclusion: will you have your mind, your wisdom, your fleshly eyes be your vision? Or will you walk by faith instead, having the Lord as your vision, your shield, and your treasure?