

LESSON 10 ~THE POWER OF CONTENTMENT

SEPTEMBER 6, 2020

Background Scripture: Genesis 13

Lesson Passage: Genesis 13:1-18 (KJV)

Introduction: We are surrounded by a discontented society. People are always looking for something better than what they already have, even if they don't need it. Advertisements and salespeople routinely offer us more channels on a TV than we could ever watch, more electronic gadgets than we could ever use, and more food than we could really eat. Yet we find ourselves accustomed to expecting more than what we need in order to feel like we are getting the best possible deal.

This reality of our culture has spilled into our spiritual lives. We have couples divorcing because they think they will be more content as singles. We have singles who long to be married to the point of missing out on this season of their lives to be close to God. We have children who long to be free from their parents' authority and parents who long to be retired. Yet if we would really embrace contentment, we could experience a greater and deeper power of self-control and joy. Our contentment can't be rooted in our marriage, children, work, singleness, or ministry. The power of contentment comes out of those who know that God is in control of their lives and is always working out things for their good.

Scripture Reference: Genesis 13:1-18 (KJV)

1 And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. 2 And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. 3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; 4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord. 5 And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. 6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. 7 And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. 8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. 9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. 10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. 11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. 12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. 13 But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. 14 And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: 15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. 16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. 17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. 18 Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord.

Topic Explored: *"The Power of Contentment"* ~ The Rolling Stones sang, "You can't always get what you want. But if you try sometimes, well you just might find, you get what you need." Many of us think this way. There are things that we want, even demand, that we know we will never get. But biblically speaking, you can always get what you want. When your heart is aligned with God's heart, when He is enough for you, you only want what He wants to give you. Of course, you pray, seek, and labor for some things that will never come to pass, but in the end, you are content with God and whatever He decides for your life. He is your *Portion* (Psalm 73:25). Abraham understood this and it enabled him to stand down when faced with a conflict with Lot. Being content removes the fretfulness of trying to be like everyone else or only experiencing joy when everything goes our way. A contented woman or man, in whatever season of life can be used by God to accomplish their dreams and destiny in Him—nothing is impossible for him/her. True contentment comes out of a desire to accept life as God has ordained and not according to the dictates of the world.

Memory Verses: *8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren* (Genesis 13:8) KJV

Lesson Focus: Genesis 13:1-18 (KJV)

Verses 1–7 ~ We don't have to get our way to solve a conflict. In fact, the quicker we are willing to stand down, the quicker the situation can be resolved. This conflict between Abraham and Lot arose because of the physical blessings they received. Each of them possessed many flocks, servants, and herds. This put a strain on the land and caused strife between the herdsmen (v. 7). Verse 6 tells us "their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together."

Many of us tend to think more is always better. If we had more money or time or friends, we would be happier and at peace. But rarely is that the case! We tend to put joy on hold until we obtain some goal that we think we must achieve. But we get there only to find out that we desire even more or what we pursued isn't all we hoped it would be. Men often pursue a promotion only to find themselves getting home much later, sleeping less, and devoting less time to their family and church. Conflict can arise over having much.

Verses 8-9 ~ Abraham would rather not be with Lot than be at odds with him. This is an important truth. Abraham yields to Lot's choice of any part of the land Lot desires. He stands down. He does not have to win this battle. He says, "Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left" (v.9). Abraham appears to value Lot over the land. He refuses to let possessions trump his love for a person. Part of learning to stand down comes from recognizing the value of people. People matter more than possessions. We may get what we want at times, but in the process lose the person. People matter. And they matter more than possessions.

Verses 10-13 ~ Learn the danger of greener grass. Lot chose greener pastures, literally! The lush and fertile land of the Jordan Valley drew his attention. The writer indicates that this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (v.10), and that the men of Sodom were wicked (v.13). We get an indication that this was the wrong decision for Lot. Abraham does not seem to care which land he gets. The allure and beauty of the land did not appeal to him. What appears to be a better situation can, in the end, bring us great harm. We must guard against thinking

that the "grass is greener on the other side." This can be a source of pain and frustration for us, and it can cause much turmoil in our relationships.

Verses 14-18 ~ Rest in God's provision. God had a plan and a place for Abraham. The Lord would provide. Abraham trusted this. We see his trust displayed when he built an altar to the Lord. He believed God would make good on His promises (Genesis 12:1-7). He didn't feel the need to fight with Lot or battle for his own preferences. This is contentment in action. As Christians we have the ultimate provision from God. We don't necessarily have a piece of land. We have a Person. God gave His Son for us. He died and rose again to secure our place with Him (John 14:1-4). That is why we can be content. We have Him as our *Portion* and *Treasure*.

Let's talk about it. . .

- 1. Are you able to trust God's provision? Do you believe God has a plan and a place for you because of what Christ did (Romans 8:28-29)? Will you rest content in Him?**
- 2. Are you focusing on possessions and achievements at the cost of people? Imagine how many conflicts might be resolved if we focused on relating well to each other and standing down to avoid severing the relationship.**
- 3. Are you pursuing something right now that may cause conflict with your family, friends, or church later? Why must you have this possession, reward, or possession?**
- 4. Application: Guard against thinking that bigger is always better. Meditate on Philippians 4:11-13 and how Paul was content in any and every circumstance.**

Making it personal:

- You don't have to get your way to solve a conflict. God has a better way. Stand down. Trust Him. Look to Christ as your joy. Find your contentment in Him.

Closing Prayer: *"Dear Lord, we want to be content in this season of our life, even when everything seems more difficult than what we expected. We need Your Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with contentment every day. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen!"*