

Introduction

Coworkers who set their passwords to "IhateSharleen#!" and "IhateTyler#!"

1. Because we're all sinful human beings, conflict is inevitable
2. This is true of brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, parents and children, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and even between fellow believers
3. So the issue isn't if we will have conflict, but when we have conflict, and what we will do to help ease or resolve the conflict
4. Today we're going to talk about a conflict that arose between Abram and Lot, and see how it was resolved, which hopefully will serve as an example for us

A. Abram's prosperity brought conflict (13:1-7)

1. Abram and Lot returned from Egypt wealthy men (READ 13:1-5):
 - a. After being kicked out of Egypt by the Pharaoh, Abram first returned to the Negev (southern part of Canaan or what ultimately became Israel) and then back to Bethel where he originally settled and built an altar to God
 - b. Vs. 2 and 5 remind us of the wealth that Abram and Lot had accumulated:
 - 1) Part of this wealth was acquired when they lived in Haran before entering Canaan (see 12:5)
 - 2) However, if you remember from our passage last week, the Pharaoh of Egypt also gave Abram **"sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels"** in exchange for taking Sarai into his harem
 - 3) As a result, when Abram returned to Bethel, v. 12:13 says, **"Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold."**
 - 4) V.5 simply describes Lot as having **"flocks and herds and tents"** but v. 6 describes both he and Abram as having **"possession so great that they were not able to remain together"**
2. Unfortunately, all this wealth led to conflict between Abram's family and Lot's (READ 13:6-7):
 - a. The size of their flocks must have been substantial because there wasn't enough land to support both of them
 - b. This is likely what led to the strife or disputes between the herdsmen who cared for each of their livestock
 - c. The note about the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelling in the land indicates they weren't the only ones sharing the land; Abram may have been promised the land by God but the original inhabitants were still living there and likely using the land to graze their livestock as well
 - d. So essentially what we have here is the blessings of wealth leading to conflict
3. Takeaway: While prosperity and wealth can be a blessing, they can also lead to conflict:
 - a. They can certainly lead to conflict between individuals, even believers:
 - 1) James dealt with this in his letter because there was conflict between the rich and the poor

- 2) The rich were oppressing the poor:
 - a) James 2:6: "But you have dishonored the poor man; Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?"
 - b) See also James 5:1-6
- 3) The non-rich weren't innocent, however:
 - a) They were apparently lusting after and coveting what others had (READ James 4:1-4)
 - b) They were also complaining or groaning against one another (READ James 5:7-9)
- b. Prosperity and wealth can also lead to conflict between us and God:
 - 1) Jesus said, **"Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven"** (Matthew 19:23) and **"...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God"** (Matthew 19:24)
 - 2) This is often because our hearts are where our treasures are; we store up treasures on earth instead of treasures in heaven
 - 3) Paul wrote to Timothy, **"...those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs"** (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

B. Abram's sacrificial actions fostered peace (13:8-13)
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1. Abram is the one who initiated the solution and it's one that involved sacrifice (READ 13:8-9):
 - a. The first thing we see here is that Abram was the peacemaker; he initiated the resolution to the conflict and cites their being family as one of the reasons
 - b. The second thing we see is that Abram makes a gracious and sacrificial offer to Lot:
 - 1) God had promised the land of Canaan to Abram
 - 2) All of the land was rightfully Abram's so he could have simply sent Lot on his way to fend for himself, or he could have taken the best of the land for himself and gave what he didn't want to Lot (kind of reminds me of what the U.S. government did to the Indians)
 - 3) Instead, what Abram did was offer up to Lot whatever land he wanted and committed himself to take what was left (RE-READ 13:9)
 - c. Now, we might expect Lot here to reply, "No, no, no! You take the best of the land" but that's not what he does (READ 13:10-13):
 - 1) In stark contrast to Abram's selfless and sacrificial offer, Lot looked around and saw that the best of the land was found in the Jordan valley where there was water everywhere and the land was lush and green like the **"the garden of the LORD"** which was fed by four intersecting rivers and the land of Egypt which was watered by the massive Nile
 - 2) It was apparently too tempting to resist so Lot decided to take the best of the land for himself and settled in the cities of the Jordan valley near Sodom
 - 3) Now, in some not-so-subtle foreshadowing Moses reminds us that Lot's selfish choice would ultimately lead him into trouble because the men of Sodom weren't just wicked, they were **"wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD"** (13:13)
2. I would also add, even though it's not stated specifically in the passage, that Abram's selfless and sacrificial actions required an element of faith:

- a. Abram could have taken the best of the land believing that it gave him the best opportunity to prosper and fulfill God's promises
 - b. Instead, by allowing Lot to take the best land and settling for what was left, Abram demonstrated faith that God could and would still fulfill His promises
3. Takeaway: God's people resolve conflict through selflessness, sacrifice, and faith:
- a. The Bible is filled with statements and commands calling on us to be peacemakers:
 - 1) In Matthew 5:9 Jesus said, **"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God"**
 - 2) In Romans 12:18 the Bible says, **"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."**
 - 3) In 14:19 it says, **"So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another"**
 - 4) Hebrews 12:14 says, **"Pursue peace with all men..."**
 - b. Sometimes, to be the peacemaker we have to be like Abram by making some sacrifices and considering others' needs or desires above our own; it may even require that we give up some selfishness and pride (READ Philippians 2:1-4)
 - c. Now, this doesn't mean that God expects us to be a doormat and let people walk all over us, but it does require that we be motivated to seek peace and do whatever we can to foster that peace, as much as it depends on us
 - d. And, also like Abram, doing this is an act of faith because we trust that God will still be faithful to us and reward us for our sacrifice, maybe not in this life but certainly in the next
 - e. This leads to the third and final point...

<p>C. Abram's benevolence and faith was reciprocated by the Lord (13:14-18)</p>

- 1. Benevolence refers to the disposition for doing good or acts of kindness and is a good word to describe Abram's actions in this passage; it's also a good word to describe the Lord's response to Abram
- 2. As He had done before, the Lord confirmed the promises He had made to Abram back in Ur and again once he entered Canaan (READ 13:14-18):
 - a. In the Lord's original promise to Abram in Genesis 12, He sent him to the land of Canaan and promised to make him into a great nation
 - b. When Abram settled in Shechem in the land of Canaan, the Lord revealed that he would give the land to his descendants
 - c. Here we see even more details:
 - 1) The land would extend way beyond where Abram had settled, and would include land as far as he could see from the north, south, east and west
 - 2) The Lord would give the land to Abram's descendants forever
 - 3) And, his descendants would be "as the dust of the earth"
- 3. After Lot took the best of the land, it appeared from an earthly perspective as if Abram got the short end of the stick; but that's not the case because God confirmed with Abram that all the land would still belong to his descendants
- 4. Abraham's sacrifice, benevolence and faith were met by God reconfirming His promises to him
- 5. Takeaway: Our sacrifices, benevolence and faith do not go unnoticed or unrewarded by God:

- a. The Bible is filled with promises that we will be rewarded for doing good, especially when it involves doing good to those who mistreat us:
 - 1) Luke 6:35: **“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great,”**
 - 2) Hebrews 6:10: **“For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.”**
 - 3) Colossians 3:23-24: **“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.”**
- b. Some of the Lord’s rewards may be here and now, while others are certainly eternal, but truth is that the Lord rewards the sacrifices and good works we do

Conclusion

1. We find in this passage this morning the danger that conflict poses to God’s people:
 - a. Here it was Abram and Lot, and the conflict was brought about by the abundance they both acquired
 - b. This seems to be a recurring theme for many in that prosperity and wealth are often a cause of conflict, even within the Church
 - c. However, regardless of the cause of conflict, it can be like a cancer within the church, and one that can fester if it’s not properly addressed
2. One of the principles we saw today in Abram was that he addressed the conflict with Lot by putting Lot’s needs above his own through sacrifice, doing good, and simply trusting in the promises of God
3. This is a good life lesson for us and something we should emulate as the people of God—when faced with conflict, we should seek peace (as the Bible says) as far as it depends on us and this may require that we make sacrifices, do good, and simply trust the Lord to reward us for the actions we’ve taken to resolve the conflict