

CONTENTMENT IN THE LIFE OF FAITH
GENESIS 13:8-24

Faith in the living God is a powerful influence in a life. The contrast between a life lived by faith and one lived without faith is clearly demonstrated in the incidents in this section of Genesis. We have before us Abram, the man of faith and Lot, the man of this world. They are in the same circumstance but their reaction to the circumstance is entirely different. Worldly Lot is full of restlessness and greed. Believing Abram is full of contentment and peace. As we pursue the record of their lives in Genesis, in the end Abram is still a man of wealth and influence though this was never first in his life. Lot ends up penniless and broken even though this was first in his life. The record of the life of Abram is a great encouragement to pursue faith as your life principle.

It was the wealth of the two men that created the circumstance in which faith was demonstrated. When Abram had arrived in Canaan he was a man of considerable wealth. His brief venture into Egypt had only increased his wealth. The hand of God was upon Abram so that everything he did seem to prosper. Lot also had been able to acquire considerable wealth. It may have been because of his association with Abram and his following of the example of Abram. We do know that when he got away from Abram and his influence that he lost all of his wealth that he had accumulated.

These two men had contrasting attitudes toward their wealth and prosperity. Abram was a man who put the will of God for his life above everything else. Lot was a man who put material prosperity first. When their flocks became so large that it became a source of strife between their

herdsmen, they realized that something must be done. Believing Abram took the initiative. He said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsman and your herdsman; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left." He generously provided Lot the opportunity to make the choice.

It didn't take Lot long to make his choice. He pitched his tents toward what seemed to be the most prosperous section of the Middle East, Sodom and Gomorrah. Abram was left to live in the hills of Judah with his flocks. At the time it seemed that Lot had gotten the better end of the deal but it was no source of discomfort for Abram. He had a contented heart through the whole process.

I. FAITH BRINGS CONTENTMENT WITH THE WILL OF GOD.

The proposition that Abram laid before Lot, giving him the first choice, was an expression of contentment with the will of God. He obviously had the right to make the first choice. He was the elder of the two; he was also Lot's uncle which added to his prerogatives. He was the one who had led the expedition from Haran; he was the more powerful of the two. Yet, he generously chooses to forego his own rights and to give Lot the first choice. Why did he take such a step? The answer must be found in his faith. He can act with such generosity because in his heart he had contentment with the will of God. He has committed his choice to the will of God. Two aspects of his faith are responsible for his contentment in this moment of stress.

1. Trust God to work out His will in the circumstances of life.

Abram was confident that he was where he was because God had put him there. He had traveled from Ur to the land of Canaan in obedience to the Lord. He had discovered through his venture into Egypt that the safest place to be is in the center of the will of God. Surely God will be able to exercise His sovereign will in this circumstance in which he finds himself. He is trusting God to work out what is right.

This is always a source of great contentment and peace to the person of faith. It takes the pressure off whenever you can just commit the circumstance of life into the hand of God. When you discover that God can be trusted to work out His purpose for your good in every circumstance, you can live in that circumstance with inner peace and contentment.

2. Trust that the will of God is good.

This is something that is settled in the heart of the man of faith. His faith has brought him into such an understanding of the nature of God that he knows God can be trusted to do what is good. Abram has found that the will of God that brought him to the land of Canaan has been good. Everything God has done in his life has been good. Will not God do what is right and best in this circumstance in the conflict with Lot? Surely He will! He is convinced that he can commit the whole situation into the hand of God and that God will do what is good.

This wonderful power of faith is demonstrated throughout the Scriptures. Jesus our Lord was always a person with a contented heart. In every circumstance in His life He is free from anxiety and fear and is full of contentment and peace. How can He live a life of peace in the midst of such troubling circumstances? How can He be so contented when there are around him all kinds

of false accusations and rivalries? The secret is in His faith as the incarnate Son of God He has unshakable confidence in the will of his heavenly Father. He knows the Father will do what is best and right in every circumstance.

The Apostle Paul lived by this principal. Even when he found himself in the most dismal and depressing circumstances, he had a contented heart. Even from the Roman prison he can write the Philippian Letter which is so full of joy and peace.

Have you discovered the secret of inner contentment? It is found in a believing, faithful relationship with God. When ever you learn to walk by faith you will find yourself with a contented heart.

II. FAITH BRINGS CONTENTMENT WITH THE PROVISION OF GOD.

The movement of Lot toward Sodom brought great pain to his life. After a while he found himself living in Sodom as a rather successful citizen of that community. When a war broke out between the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and some other cities, Lot found himself caught in the middle. Because he lived among the people of Sodom, he was victim of the conquest. He was captured along with all of his possessions and carried away into captivity.

Abram was the man of the hour. Utilizing the servants that were under his command, Abram made a surprise raid on the conquerors of Sodom and Gomorrah and rescued his nephew, Lot. There were 318 men in his company but they proved to be more than adequate to defeat these aggressive enemies.

The king of Sodom was so grateful to Abram that he had rescued him along with Lot that he pressed Abram to take all of the spoil of the victory. Instead Abram did a strange thing. Instead of taking the spoil of the victory he insisted that he wanted nothing from the victory.

About the same time that he met the king of Sodom another king appeared on the scene. He was Melchizedek, the king of Salem. Melchizedek was also the priest of the most high God. He is one of the strangest and most unusual personalities to appear on the pages of the Old Testament. There has always been a mystery about the identity of this man Melchizedek.

When he met Abram, he offered him something completely different. He brought bread and wine, and pronounced a verbal blessing on Abram. He said, “Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God, which had delivered thine enemies into thy hand.” Abram received the blessing with gratitude and gave to Melchizedek a tenth of everything he had. This was the first instance in Scripture of someone giving a tithe to the work of God in the honor of the Lord. Then, after giving away the tithe to Melchizedek, Abram turned the king of Sodom away without taking even a piece of string from the spoil.

Why did Abram refuse the spoil of this victory? It was obviously rightfully his if he wanted it. He did not refuse it because he was already a rich man. It is true that he was a rich man but riches will not keep a man from taking further riches. All of us know examples of rich men who have only become richer through some maneuver they have made.

The secret is found in the faith of this man. He was content with the provision of God. He does not want to look to the king of Sodom to enrich him, nor does he want the king of Sodom to have the pleasure of feeling that he has enriched the man of faith. He explains his refusal like this, “I have lifted up my hand unto the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even unto shoe latchet and I will not take anything that is thine, that thou should say I have made Abram rich.” Abram in no way wanted to be dependent upon the king of Sodom. Rather by faith he chose to be dependent only on the Lord God of the heavens. He was content with what ever God might provide in his life.

The next chapter in this dramatic life assures us that the faith of Abram was not disappointed. “After these things the Word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision saying, “Fear not Abram; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.”

Who could ask for more? Abram refused to let the king of Sodom enrich him because of his trusting God. So in response God gives Abram this wonderful promise. He promises himself to His servant Abram. “I will be your reward.” Is this not interesting? Abram refused the gold of this world by faith and came out a richer man.

What a lesson for all of us! Faith in the living God is the secret of a contented heart. And the beloved Apostle assures us that contentment with godliness is great gain. The life of Abram surely confirms such an insight.