

**Where Will You Pitch Your Tent in 2013?
Genesis 13:1-13**

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We make choices all the time. Every single choice is important. Every single choice comes with a consequence. The Bible is filled with instruction concerning the importance of our choices. For example, in Galatians 6:7, Paul warned, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” The choices of Lot give us a perfect example of this lesson.

Text: Then Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev—he, his wife, and all he had, and Lot with him.² Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.³ He went by stages from the Negev to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had formerly been,⁴ to the site where he had built the altar. And Abram called on the name of Yahweh there.

⁵ Now Lot, who was traveling with Abram, also had flocks, herds, and tents.⁶ But the land was unable to support them as long as they stayed together, for they had so many possessions that they could not stay together,⁷ and there was quarreling between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were living in the land.

⁸ Then Abram said to Lot, “Please, let’s not have quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, since we are relatives.⁹ Isn’t the whole land before you? Separate from me: if you go to the left, I will go to the right; if you go to the right, I will go to the left.”

¹⁰ Lot looked out and saw that the entire Jordan Valley as far as Zoar was well watered everywhere like the LORD’s garden and the land of Egypt. This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.¹¹ So Lot chose the entire Jordan Valley for himself. Then Lot journeyed eastward, and they separated from each other.¹² Abram lived in the land of Canaan, but Lot lived in the cities of the valley and set up his tent near Sodom.¹³ Now the men of Sodom were evil, sinning greatly against the LORD.

The story of the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah is classic. Sodom is synonymous with great sin and wickedness. Even those who do not acknowledge God can acknowledge the moral depravity of the historical places of Sodom and Gomorrah. In light of the wickedness of these places, Lot’s choice in Genesis 13 is a surprising move if he is interested in pleasing God.

Facts about our Choices:

Lest you think that Lot was unaware of the wickedness of Sodom, let us point out several important aspect of this text.

1. The Contrast of the decisions and actions of Abram and Lot—The Biblical writer seems determined to point out the difference between Abram and Lot. Abram builds altars as described in verse 4 and verse 18. Lot is never said to build such an altar to God. In place of the description of an altar, there is a discussion of the great wickedness of the city. (v. 13)

2. The Choice of the Land—The Biblical writer again seems determined to indicate that Abram’s choice is based on a conversation with God. Lot’s choice is based on a conversation with himself. (Contrast verse 14 and verse 10)
3. The Certainty of the Wickedness of Sodom—The implication of the text in the words “exceedingly wicked and sinful” is that their sin was exceptional in every human way. It would have been impossible for Lot to not know about the wickedness of the people.
4. The Continued Flirtation with Sodom—The implication of this text is that Lot continued to move east toward Sodom. Genesis 14:12 clarifies that Lot even dwelled in Sodom. He moved closer and closer until he eventually lived there. The Biblical writer’s description of Lot’s eastward movement is reminiscent of prior references to the “east” that have a negative connotation. Cain’s family in Genesis 4:16 is said to have gone out from the presence of the Lord “on the east of Eden.” In Genesis 11, those who propose to build the tower that would reach Heaven had “journeyed from the east.” The bottom line is that Lot’s choice to go east, perhaps even outside the boundaries of the land that God had promised to Abram, is an act not keeping with good judgment.

Lot’s story helps us to see several significant **facts about our choices**.

- Every choice leads to a consequence.

John Ashcroft wrote a book entitled, *Lessons from a Father to His Son*. In the book Ashcroft recounts lessons that he learned from his pastor-father. As he gives the lesson, he recounts a little vignette from his father as to how he learned the lesson. The first lesson is about choices. John says that he learned this lesson by his father giving him flying lessons

“What do I do?” I shouted back to my father, who was seated behind me.

“Just grab the stick and push it straight forward.”

“Okay.” I took hold of that stick and did as I was told. Immediately the plane went into a straight bombing-raid dive toward a farm on the outskirts of Springfield! My stomach came up to my throat and I lost all sense of time or place as fear gripped my insides. I let go of that control stick in a millisecond, and Dad pulled the plane back up.

He had a good chuckle, and I had a good lesson: actions have consequences.¹

In fact John would go on to say...

“We are the sum of our decisions.”
(*Lessons from a Father*, John Ashcroft, former Attorney General)

- Choices rarely affect just me.

I can think of at least three groups of people that our choices affect.

¹ John Ashcroft, *Lessons from a Father to His Son*, p. 2.

- (1) Our Family
- (2) Our Friends
- (3) Our Family of Faith—Our Church

- Bad choices lead to more bad choices.

There seems to be a spiraling effect of our bad choices. Lot moved closer and closer to Sodom. We seem to move closer and closer to sin. As we do, we move farther and farther away from God. Remember the Proverb that says, “Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared?” (Proverbs 6:27-28) The resounding answer to this rhetorical question is “NO!”

Facing our Choices—How to make good decisions:

1. Be Clear about your motives.

Am I seeking greater . . .

- Popularity
- Power
- Pleasure
- Possessions

2. Consider the consequences of my choice.
3. Counsel with wise friends.

*“Where there is no counsel, the people fall;
But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.
Proverbs 14:14*

*“Without counsel, plans go awry,
But in the multitude of counselors they are established.
Proverbs 15:22*

4. Consult God and His Word.

Some things we know to be poor choices because God’s Word tells us that they are bad choices.

And Finally. . .

Can you be willing to admit when you have made a bad choice?

Admit and Repent before it is too late!

Conclusion: There is a lot of talk about falling off of the so-called fiscal cliff as we approach 2013. As bad as that sounds, there would be nothing as catastrophic as falling off of the moral and spiritual cliff. Sadly, some will? It depends on where you decide to pitch your tent.

Where will you pitch your tent in 2013? As we begin this new year together, let me pose a few questions as to where you will pitch your spiritual tent in 2013?

- Will you pitch your spiritual tent in regular Bible Study and Worship attendance?
- Will you pitch your spiritual tent in personal spiritual growth through time in God's Word and prayer?
- Will you pitch your spiritual tent in obedience to the LORD's commands or in willful disobedience to His commands?