

## **“I Will’- You Can Go Through A Lot (With Lot) With That Promise”**

**Genesis 13:5-18**

**11 February 2024**

### **GOD LOVES TO REASSURE HIS PEOPLE WITH OUTLANDISH PROMISES.**

God loves to reassure us with out-of-this-world promises, too good to be true promises. God loves to reassure us with His wonderful, strange, mysterious, and unbelievable promises. He’s just that way. It brings Him delight to see us encouraged, comforted, and strengthened by His outlandish promises.

And, that’s what we’ll see in our passage today. God appears to Abram once again to reiterate His promise. To encourage him. To lift him up. Not to badger him. Not to shame him for blowing it in Egypt. Not to rub his face in his sin. That’s not Jesus. Some preachers try to say that Jesus is like that. He’s not.

Jesus loves to reassure His people, His bride. Tell me, what husband- what good husband- loves to berate his bride? No one. And, not so with Jesus. He shows up to reassure our hearts. To calm our fears. He’s just that kind of God. He’s the *If-I-am-for-you-who-can-be-against-you* God. Hmmm. I like that! I’m so glad we serve a God who delights to see His children reassured of His love, reassured of His promises.

And that’s just what He did with Abram. So, turn in your Bibles to Genesis 13 where we will see the *If-I-am-for-you-who-can-be-against-you* God in action. But, before we see that, we’re gonna eavesdrop on a really big real estate deal going down on the plains of Canaan.

LOOK AT VERSE 5...

*And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together, and there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land.*

*Then Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. Is not the whole land before you? 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.” And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other. Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.*

So, as we saw last week, Abram faced a famine. No rain, no food, no nothing. But, now, he faces an altogether different problem: he has too much! Too much cattle and donkeys and sheep and servants. But, it’s not just Abram who has too much, so does his nephew Lot. They have both been blessed by Yahweh. Their businesses have been thriving. Everywhere you look its donkeys and cows and sheep and servants.

Life is crowded around Casa de Abram, so he and his nephew Lot must part ways. It’s a little too close for comfort. Their employees are fighting with each other over whose cow is whose, so they have to separate.

And, Abram very generously offers Lot the first pick. Lot can choose any spot and Abram will go the other way. So, Lot looks east and sees how green it is, and the abundant water supply, and how it’s basically like the Garden of Eden, so it’s a no-brainer for him: *“Abe, you head west, old man.”*

\* INSERT ABRAHAM LOT MAP

Now, I don’t think Lot is wrong for choosing the spot he did. He used wisdom. It was well-watered. It was like the Garden of Eden, so why not choose it? Of course, in writing Genesis, Moses gives us a hint at the trouble that would soon come (i.e. Sodom). And, of course, the Israelites living in the wilderness when Moses writes the book of Genesis for them, they would have heard stories about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, so when they hear that Lot chose an area near Sodom, they would shriek. They know what’s coming.

But, these parenthetical remarks about Sodom in verses 10 and 13 are not any indicators about Lot’s spiritual maturity, or how he was greedy, or how he was worldly. They are just that: parenthetical remarks for the original audience, and now us, that Lot would be moving into an area occupied by wicked people. But, moving to a lush land so that your family and business can prosper doesn’t necessarily make you a wicked person. Yes, you might be tempted to give in to sin, but Lot moving into this area is not a moral issue. He simply chose the best land! Wouldn’t you?

The text in no way tells us that Lot knew ahead of time that this would be a bad move. It doesn't tell us that Lot knew it was full of wicked people. I mean, come on! Any area that Lot chose would be full of wicked people! Any area that Abram chose would be full of wicked people, and it was! Just keep reading Genesis! Besides, what if Lot chose Canaan, the area that Abram ended up in, would that make Abram an unwise, foolish person for heading toward Sodom? No.

Wherever they went, both Lot and Abram would be pilgrims in this world, trying to be faithful to Yahweh as disciples...kinda like you and me with our neighbors and co-workers and family members who don't know Jesus. We're just exiles, pilgrims, trying to follow Jesus as disciples as we are surrounded by people who hate our God. This is *Discipleship 101*.

Unfortunately, Lot gets painted as a bad guy for picking the good spot. But, Lot is just being a wise, prudent businessman. He wants to flourish at his job. So, I don't think the text paints Lot in a negative light. You'll hear that when you read commentaries and listen to preachers, though. Everybody, and I mean *everybody*, throws Lot under the bus for picking the incredibly lush, fertile land that he did. I don't. And, I don't think the text implies that either, and that's very important!

But, enough about what preachers and Bible commentators say. What does Scripture, what does God's word say about Lot? Was he sinful for picking this area, and living near and in Sodom? Let's allow the apostle Peter to weigh in here. Pay close attention to how Peter describes Lot. Listen for the repeated adjective:

2 Peter 2:7-8

*...and if he (God) rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard)...*

Hmm. Righteous, righteous, righteous. Distressed by the sexual perversion in Sodom. Tormented by what he saw and heard in Sodom. Hmm. Sounds like a godly guy to me! I think preachers and commentary writers are gonna be lining up on the New Earth to apologize to "righteous" Lot. It is Lot's wife who was worldly and who will later be condemned by Jesus (see Luke 17:28-32), but Lot, well he would be a guy that you would want your daughter to bring home. He was righteous.

We owe a lot of apologies to Lot. You'll read people say that because Lot "*lifted up his eyes and saw*" that he was walking by sight and not by faith, but the text doesn't say that! That's kinda important! Lot was just a wise businessman who wanted his farm to succeed, so he chose the best spot. Wouldn't you? Would you open up a coffee shop in the middle of the desert or in a thriving downtown location? Lot is just being a wise businessman. Can't a guy have a successful farm, can't a guy make good money without being accused of being greedy and worldly? Well, apparently Lot can't 'cause commentators and preachers need someone to throw under the bus.

Okay. I got that off my chest. Thanks for coming to my *Ted Talk*- my *Lot Talk*.

I think the bigger picture here is that whatever happens in life, the sovereign God will keep His promise. Whatever people do to us, whatever choices they make- whatever- God will keep His promise. God's hand of providence will guide us each step of the way. Lot could have gone in the other direction and Yahweh would have blessed Abram as he settled near Sodom. So, it wasn't who picked what land, it was *Who* was going to bless each person in said land and then would they follow Yahweh faithfully as a disciple. And, both men did just that.

It's worth taking a moment to talk about God's providence here because that's what is driving this whole scene. I love what chapter 5 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* says about this:

*Of Providence*

*God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.*

Allow me to add something to chapter 5 of the Westminster Confession of Faith:

*God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things AND ALL BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS ON THE PLAINS OF CANAAN from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.*

Everything that God does in this world, He does for His glory- even when two men are choosing where to put their cows out to pasture.

Everything that God does He does for His glory. Everything that God does in this world is to highlight and spread the fame of who He is. Everything that God does is meant to display the glory of His grace. Everything that God does is meant to stir the hearts of His people so that they, by the Spirit of God, may find their joy in His Son Jesus. Everything that God was doing in Abram's life was so that he would be a blessing to the entire world, which now includes you! Think about that!

Yahweh sovereignly directed even Lot's choice of where to live. All of it fit into His plan, and all of your life fits into His plan. There is something you can get from that- it's called *peace*. Knowing that you serve a God who *upholds, directs, disposes, and governs all creatures, actions, and things* can reassure your troubled heart. That's why Jesus said, "*Let not your hearts be troubled.*"

Of course, our hearts do get troubled, right? But, when they do, we must remember Jesus' words. We must remember that we serve the *upholding, directing, disposing, and governing all creatures, actions, and things God*. So, it turns out that the doctrine of the providence of God can actually help your blood pressure, if you let it.

All of this "providence" was happening on the plains of Canaan in this conversation between Abram and Lot. Oh, to be sure, on the surface it just looks like 2 businessmen entering a contract. But, here's what it really was: the providence of God working in such a way that Abram would be a blessing to the nations (Galatians 3:14) *so that* you could come to faith in Christ! So that Abraham, the man of faith (Galatians 3:9), could have many sons and many sons could have father Abraham. Genesis 13 is about you, if you are united to Christ by faith.

Okay. Back to the text.

LOOK AT VERSE 14...

*Yahweh said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you." So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to Yahweh.*

So, after they go their separate ways, the Lord appears to Abram and told him to look around in every direction and all that he sees will be given to him and his offspring. Keep in mind that Abram's wife Sarai is barren and they have zero children. Somehow, they will have kids and grandkids and great grandkids. That comes later...when Abraham is 100 years-old and Sarah is 90 years-old.

Yes. Those 2 are gonna have kids.

So, the Lord reiterates the promise that He made to Abram back in chapter 12. Abram would have offspring, so much offspring that it would be like counting dust. And, the Lord would give all this land to Abram. This land would not be a rental. It is a promise. It is a promise given to all the sons of Abraham by faith and will be fulfilled on the new Earth, when Jesus returns. As Scotty Smith says-

*Thus begins one of the most important chapters in the big story of redemption which runs through the whole Bible like a doxological drama of grace. Through the unlikely and unsuspecting agent, Abram, God committed himself to gather a people from every race, tribe and people group to love outrageously, cherish forever, and ultimately plant in the new heaven and new earth- the magnificent future-fulfillment of the "land" promise. All of this pan-national redemption and cosmic restoration is coming to pass not because of Abram/Abraham, but because of the One who eventually arrived through the family tree, Jesus, the promised Messiah, Savior and Lord, Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of every promise God has made... for in Jesus all the promises of God are an unequivocal resounding "Yes!"*

What's happening in Genesis 13 is nothing short of God purposing to love *you* outrageously, cherish *you* forever, and ultimately plant *you* in the new heaven and new earth! And, people think the Old Testament is boring! No way! There is an eternal promise from God- right smack dab in the middle of an outlandish land deal between an uncle and his nephew- an eternal promise from God Himself to love *you* outrageously, cherish *you* forever, and ultimately plant *you* in the new heaven and new earth. That ought to be enough truth to sustain you the next time the State of California and it's policies drive you nuts.

You just remember that one day you will own this whole place! From north, to south, to east, to west! Why? Because you are a son or daughter of Abraham, united to God's Son by faith. There are perks to being in Abraham's family! But, it's not just about getting land, it's even more outlandish than that: you get Jesus' heart!

Dane Ortlund says, "*For those united to Him, the heart of Jesus is not a rental; it is your new permanent residence. You are not a tenant; you are a child. His heart is not a ticking time bomb; His heart is the green pastures and still*

*waters of endless reassurances of His presence and comfort, whatever our present spiritual accomplishments. It is who He is."* (Gentle and Lowly, p.66)

So, Yahweh shows up to remind Abram of the promise He made to him. Abram can walk through the land, stick his feet in the rivers, hang a hammock up between two trees, plant a garden, "ground" himself in the grass, pick an apple and eat it. He can just mosey north, south, east, and west and take in all that Yahweh will give to him and his offspring, which now includes us!

If that warms your heart, then you have just confirmed this truth-

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God's heart beats reassurance. It is the throb of His heart. It is the promise-keeping God rushing in to help weak sinners who truly are "prone to wander." And prone to doubt, anxiety, and fear.

So, God rushes in to *give*. To comfort. To reassure. Listen, this scene here with Abram is a reminder that there is nothing Jesus would rather do than to reassure us. It's why we have the Bible! It's why the Bible is full of promises! So that we would be reassured that everything God says will come true.

I mean, the whole Bible is one big promise, one big reassurance from God. Yes, there are laws and commands, but it's not supposed to be read that way. It's a book of promise. It's a book from the promise-keeping, covenant-keeping God! As Alec Motyer says, *"The whole Bible is held together by the word covenant. At its heart, the biblical covenant is about God making and keeping promises to rescue us and establish us as his people."*

That's it. The Bible is one big promise from God to reassure us. And, how else does God reassure us?

He's given us the Lord's Supper. A bit of a cracker and a swig of juice is all it is, but that isn't *all* it is! It's assurance that we eat and drink! Can we explain to the watching world how eating bread and drinking juice assures us of His life, death, resurrection, and ascension? No. But, it does!

And, He's given us songs to sing. And, He's given us elders and deacons who shepherd and care for us. And, He's given us a church family. He just gives and gives and gives. Why? To get anything back? No! God gives to reassure us. He doesn't need anything from us.

So, why does He give? Just because it's who He is. No one has God's arm tied behind His back and making Him cry, *"Uncle!"* He gives, He loves, He reassures out of His own nature. It's just who He is. It comes from His own heart. Think about that. God is not doing "God stuff" because He has to follow a manual at work. All of this goodness that He has stored up for us, that He lavishes upon us, it just comes from His heart, from His nature. It's just who He is! Wow.

So, don't listen to any preacher who doesn't reassure you with his preaching. Why? Because God's heart is to reassure us. That's what Genesis 13 is all about. So, why listen to some mere mortal who wants you to doubt your salvation, and live in fear, and try to earn God's love? You come in here on Sunday morning needing to be reassured of God's love, reassured of God's promises, and reassured of God's Gospel, so that's what I'm gonna do.

God loves to reassure His people. For Abram, it was hearing the same promises again and then being encouraged to walk the land, as if walking the land would rub it into his soul even more. It's as if Abram would be strengthened to believe the promises by walking all over that real estate.

So, what do we do? What can we do to be reassured? We don't have land to walk through, so how can we be encouraged to trust God's promises? Well, I could answer that many ways, I am a preacher after all. But let mention just a few:

1. *Worship.* Put on some worship music. Let it recalibrate your heart. I heard an old preacher say this once:

*"Praise is the plow that prepares the heart for the planting of the promises."*

It's true. If you are struggling to believe a promise of God, then sing! Put on some worship music. Play an instrument. Praise the Lord and watch it plow the soil of your heart so that God's word can be planted in the nooks and crannies of your heart.

2. *Fellowship.* Get involved in a ministry here at Grace. Join a Sunday school class. Join a Bible study. There is something about being with other believers and having conversation about God and His word that can cause your heart to be reassured.

I experienced this past week at our Men's Bible study on 1 John. The fellowship and the conversation lifted my spirits and recalibrated my heart. Don't neglect the importance of fellowship.

3. *Write out some promises.* I pulled down the calendar on the wall in our kitchen and I wrote a promise out on every month. It was my way of "*walking through the length and breadth of the land.*" I wanted to physically look at each month of 2024 and pray over each month. And, to think about events that are coming up and rub God's promises into those dates.

\* INSERT JULY 2024 CALENDAR PIC

It was a simple little thing, but it helped me be reminded that God is already there. Jesus is already in July 2024. I don't know what my life will be like then, but Jesus is already there, and so is this promise that I wrote all over the month of July 2024:

Matthew 11:28

*"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

I don't know what July 2024 has in store for me, but Jesus does. He's already there. He's aware of all that will happen. And He has promised me that whatever is happening in my life, He will give me rest.

That's me walking through my 2024 calendar and lifting my eyes and seeing that Jesus is there. That's me intentionally focusing on the eternality of God. You see, it's the doctrine of God's eternality that comforted Abram's heart, and can comfort ours. Abram couldn't fathom his future, but he could trust that the eternal God was already there.

The Trinitarian God that we serve is the God of timeless eternity. The God who is not limited by time, but transcends time. The God who is unbounded by time. The God who never uses a calendar and doesn't own an *Apple* watch. The God who always has been and always will be. The God who simply *is*. All the time.

This is the God who awaits me and you in July of 2024. And it's this God, Christian- the God who doesn't own an *Apple* watch- who is your help. It's this God who came hand-delivering promises to Abram who would be his help. It's the God of timeless eternity who holds you in His arms. The doctrine of God's eternality can comfort your heart. It can help you stop biting your nails down to your elbows. It can help you face the future, face the unknown, without fear or anxiety.

So, Yahweh appears and says, "*I will...*" to Abram. "*I will, I will, I will*"- this is the calling card of the covenant-keeping God. This is His MO. This is His knee-jerk reaction. The I AM says, "*I will.*" That little phrase- *I will*- can be the thing that keeps you from going crazy. That little phrase- *I will*- can help you sleep at night without tossing and turning as you fret over the future. That little phrase- *I will*- is what Christian hope is founded upon. That little phrase- *I will*- can get you through quite a lot!

Think about it: How many promises in the Bible do you cling to where Jesus says these 2 words, *I will*? There's plenty, but let me just read a few:

Matthew 11:28

*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

John 6:40

*For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*

John 14:3

*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*

John 14:14

*If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.*

John 14:18

*I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*

"*I will*" is the dynamic of the covenant-keeping God. "*I will*" is what comes naturally to the great I AM. "*I will*" is what your hope is built on.

Understand this: Jesus bleeds promises. Literally, yes, on the cross. If you prick Jesus, He bleeds promises. This is just His DNA. He makes and keeps promises. In fact, I would argue that it thrills His heart to make and keep

promises. Why do I say that? Because the Bible is full of promises! If God grudgingly had to keep promises, He wouldn't litter His word with them!

I think the fact that there are so many promises in God's word means that He is inviting us to believe them. All the promises of God are an invitation from Jesus for you to take them and believe them. To preach them to your heart. To cling to. To build your hope on. To be *the* dominant voice in your life. To be the main thing that you read and meditate on.

Ralph Davis says, "*Nothing is more assuring than God's 'I will be with you'; nothing is more overwhelming than the fact that it is God who says it...There is nothing more essential for the people of God than to hear their God repeating to them amid all their changing circumstances, 'I will be with you' or 'I will not forsake you.'"*

That's what Yahweh did with Abram. Why? Because-

### **GOD LOVES TO REASSURE HIS PEOPLE WITH OUTLANDISH PROMISES.**

Maybe you need this reminder from God today:

*"I will be with you."*

Or-

*"I will not forsake you."*

Or, maybe you need the promise that lies behind Genesis 13:18, which says, "*and there he (Abram) built an altar to Yahweh.*"

This is the third time we read that Abram built an altar to Yahweh. The third time that he offers sacrifices to Yahweh. Why? Because Abram was already aware of this promise from Hebrews 8:12-

*"For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."*

You can go *through* a lot- and you can *do* a lot of stupid things- with *that* promise.

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**"I Will'- You Can Go Through A Lot (With Lot) With That Promise"**

Genesis 13:5-18

Sermon Study Questions

1. Discuss the big idea: *God loves to reassure His children with outlandish promises.* Is this how you think about God?
2. Discuss why or why not Lot made a bad decision to move east.
3. READ 2 Peter 2:7-8. How does it describe Lot?
4. Discuss the *Westminster Confession* of Faith:

*Of Providence*

*God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.*

Now, add anything going on in your life:

*God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, AND \_\_\_\_\_, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.*

5. Discuss these quotes from the sermon:

Scotty Smith

*Thus begins one of the most important chapters in the big story of redemption which runs through the whole Bible like a doxological drama of grace. Through the unlikely and unsuspecting agent, Abram, God committed himself to gather a people from every race, tribe and people group to love outrageously, cherish forever, and ultimately plant in the new heaven and new earth- the magnificent future-fulfillment of the "land" promise. All of this pan-national redemption and cosmic restoration is coming to pass not because of Abram/Abraham, but because of the One who eventually arrived through the family tree, Jesus, the promised Messiah, Savior and Lord, Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of every promise God has made... for in Jesus all the promises of God are an unequivocal resounding "Yes!"*

Some old preacher in the early 90's?

*"Praise is the plow that prepares the heart for the planting of the promises."*

Dane Ortlund

*"For those united to Him, the heart of Jesus is not a rental; it is your new permanent residence. You are not a tenant; you are a child. His heart is not a ticking time bomb; His heart is the green pastures and still waters of endless reassurances of His presence and comfort, whatever our present spiritual accomplishments. It is who He is."*

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