

# *the* Purpose *and* Promises of God

## Abram's Tent and an Altar

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### Summary

In the book of Genesis, we find elements of the narrative regarding the life of Abram (and those who follow) that are...., well, nothing short of shocking. One of them is found in today's passage. Even here at the beginning of the unfolding of the plan of redemption being worked out by God through his servant, Abram, our understanding is grown that God "...is...merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness...." (Exodus 34:6). God is faithful to his own purpose and promises, even when his chosen servants fail.

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### Outline

#### Introduction

The second part of Genesis 12 and most of Genesis 13 open a window on the dark side of humanity; even in God's chosen servant Abram and his nephew, Lot. Through the revelation of these realistic elements of humanity, the light of the steadfast love and faithfulness of God shines through. God repeats his promise to Abram concerning an offspring. [We must remember that Abram is somewhere between 75 and 86 years old and his wife, Sarai is between 65 and 75 years old when God tells him this.] Abram responds by moving his tent and settling at Hebron and responding to God by faith by building an altar, a place of sacrifice.

1. God's Protection: [12:10-13:4]

God's people are capable of taking their eyes off of God and his promises. While the resulting hurt and confusion should not be underestimated, God is able to take evil and turn it into good for his glory.

2. God's Patience: 13:5-13

God's people disobey God's commands daily. While there is a way that seems right to a man, the end of what seems right leads to death (Proverbs 14:12). While the patience of God does not give license to disobedience, the people of God should rejoice for God's steadfast love and faithfulness that triumphs over disobedience and is able to bring good out of evil.

### 3. God's Providence: [13:14-18]

God's grace shines through the darkest moments of the lives of his people as he reminds them of his true and precious promises and provides for their every need. The correct response of the people of God to his providence is humble obedience and worship.

1. What circumstances in your life have caused you to change directions in your life (education, relationships, career? What did (is) God teach(ing) you through that?
2. Looking back on the life you have lived thus far, how has God protected you (physically, spiritually, emotionally)? From your vantage point, how have his plans for your life been protected? On what evidence do you base your answer?
3. Describe a time in your life when you knowingly disobeyed God believing there was no other way to deal with the situation at hand (e.g. I had to yell at the kids in order to make the importance of the situation immediately understood)... As a result of what you learned about God from today's study, how would you respond differently to those same difficult circumstances should they present themselves again? Take time to thank God for his patience and for his care in teaching you through difficult things.
4. The strife between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen is an example of the difficult relationships that are frequently encountered in our lives. How have you handled difficult relationships in your life? Did you learn any principles about trusting God as you deal with difficult relationships from the study in Genesis 13?
5. Abram learned that actively trusting God (living by faith) far outweighs walking by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). What are some areas of your life where you are tempted to trust what you experience with your physical senses rather than placing your absolute confidence in God alone (who you do not see)?
6. Abram's actions with his tent and the altar were visible and tangible responses of his heart to the God he could not see. What are the components of your life which evidence the responses of your heart of worship to the commands of your Master and King?