

引言 INTRODUCTION

We have faced situations where going to the left or the right will cause contrasting outcomes. Sometimes, you have the time to consider different options. On other occasions, you have to make a decision right away. There was a severe flood a few weeks ago in the San Antonio, Texas, area. Over 100 people perished. May the Lord comfort those families that lost loved ones. While some people did not make it, others fought for their lives. You may have read amazing stories of survival. People woke up family members as water was seeping through the doors. The water came so quickly that it was impossible to escape by car. So they grabbed essential items like food and clothes and rushed to the attic. Many punched through dry wall with their fists and crawled to the outside. Then they sat on the roof in rain, waiting for rescue at sunrise. The result could have been very different if people reacted some other ways. In our passage today, Abram and his nephew Lot had to make a tough decision. Lot wanted to take a short-cut. But as it turned out, he was cut short of God's blessings. Decisions will affect our destination. Last time, Abram almost lost his wife to Pharaoh because of a bad decision. God protected Abram over a crisis. Now his family returned to Canaan. New tests would keep coming to polish Abram's faith. He must rely on God to overcome those challenges.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 衝突的起因 Source of Conflict (v. 1-7)

We see another problem arose as we come to chapter 13. Let us read from **verses 1 to 7** to understand the source of the conflict. Abram and Lot had too many possessions, so much so that there was not enough space for them to live together. Verse 2 says Abram became very rich. He was already wealthy when he left his hometown. On top of that, Pharaoh gave Abram flocks and servants as a compensation for Sarai. Verse 5 describes that Lot had a lot of properties too. Perhaps Abram shared some treasures with his nephew. Both groups of people needed water, food and also grass for animals. Tension escalated to quarrels. Such conflict can lead to a potential danger, as verse 7 implies: **... At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land.** God promised Abram the land. But the area was still occupied by the natives. Abram and Lot should team up together, in case the local people gave them trouble. The conflict was more than a management issue, it was due to disagreement. People take care of each other when they are in poverty. But they may become selfish when they enjoy prosperity. Unity would be dissolved when Abram's and Lot's servants were only mindful of their own interest. Why were they in a foreign land? It was because God promised to give Abram and his descendants the land. He also promised to bless others through Abram. Lot was blessed by his uncle. He could continue to enjoy more blessings if he learned from Abram to follow God. Unfortunately, Lot had a different mentality. Verse 4 gives us a hint: **... Abram called upon the name of the Lord.** He prayed to God as he returned to the location where he built an altar before. Abram had a habit of prayer. But we do not see Lot pray. People who pray tend to be humble. They ask the Lord for advice, instead of taking business into their own hands. Of course, truly humble people will follow God's instructions accordingly. Both Abram and Lot must learn to

seek God's guidance. The same is true for a church. If problem a could arise between two persons, how much easier will an argument happen in a group? Paul reminds us the keys to live in peace with fellow believers in Philippians 2:3-5 – **3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.** Harmony can only be achieved through humility. It is not about who listens to whom. But everyone must listen to the Lord. In the context, Paul says Jesus is our perfect example of humility. The King of all kings came into the world as a person. He chose the lowest status as a servant. He died the most shameful way on a cross. Jesus did all that to identify with us and to save us. He put God's glory and our blessings above His wellbeing. We can practice humility by imitating His example of sacrifice. If conflicts are caused by self-centeredness, then the antidote is other-centeredness. Otherwise, pride can easily overcome us. There are a lot of capable people even in a small church like ours. We have to see each other as a family, instead of treating each other like enemies. We complete each other, and not compete with each other. Outsiders may only see problems. But family works as a team to solve problems. It is easy to stand on the sideline and criticize. But will you roll up your sleeves and ask: "How can I help?" Rather than pointing a finger, you lend a helping hand. We talk less and do more. It does not matter who gets the credit as long as people get the benefit and God gets the glory.

2. 衝突的解決 Solution to Conflict (v. 8-13)

A conflict started between the two groups of herdsmen. Abram then suggested a solution to the conflict to Lot. Let us hear the reading from **verses 8 to 13.** Abram was the older person and he should choose first. However, he gave the right to Lot. Wherever Lot picked, Abram would go the opposite direction. From then on, the two of them would separate. That implicitly means that Lot would forfeit God's promises. Let us pay attention to how Lot came to his decision. Look at verse 10 again: **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.)** Lot selected the plain of the Jordan river near Sodom and Gomorrah. Bible scholars debate the exact location of the area. But they generally agree that it is near Dead Sea. The author leaves a note about the future destruction of the two cities. We will study those stories as we come to chapters 17 and 18. The writer describes in verse 13 that the people there were "**great sinners against the Lord.**" Lot chose the region because it was a fertile place. It was like the land of Egypt. Lot just came back from the nation. The Nile river ensures a constant supply of water, which is critical for survival. All in all, Lot based his assessment on observation. Verse 10 says he "lifted up his eyes and saw" that the land was good. The expression reminds us of Eve's reaction when she saw the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 3:6 records: **...the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes...** Eve liked what she saw, and therefore she ignored God's clear warning and ate the fruit. Sin came into the world as a result. Both Lot and Eve made decisions purely by what they saw. The point is that Lot only saw what he liked, but he did not foresee God's promise. Therefore, he pursued immediate results over God's future blessings. Eventually, he suffered great losses when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Appearance can be subjective, even deceptive. Satan surely knows how to appeal to our eyes. 1 John 2:15-16 alert us: **15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the**

Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. The fallen world attracts us in three ways: things that look good, feel good and things that we can brag about. Examples are everywhere when you use the internet or turn on your TV. Let us focus on the look. Many people suffer from buyer's remorse because they make a decision based solely on what they see. They can return the clothes that do not fit, or sell the cars they do not like. But accepting a job offer or marrying a person are difficult, if not impossible to change. Therefore, we should evaluate options with a spiritual perspective. We ask if a certain choice will draw us closer to God or it will drag us away from Him. Does it only make us look good, or does it reflect God's glory? Will it provide a short-term satisfaction, or does it give us a long-term joy? For things like which phone to buy or where to eat may not matter that much. You can rely on your preference or read product reviews. You can ask a friend for input too. For choices that have far-reaching consequences, you should seek the Lord's guidance. God may remind you of relevant Bible verses as you pray. You can also ask some mature Christians and godly friends for advice. They know you and know God's Word. They will tell you things you need to hear, not things that you like to hear. You will be able to make a wiser decision after considering all those factors.

3. 衝突後的保證 Security after Conflict (v. 14-18)

Lot took his people and moved toward Sodom. God spoke to Abram after the conflict and gave him security. Let us read **verses 14 to 18**. God reiterated two promises to Abram. First, God would give the land to Abram and his descendants. In verse 14, God asked Abram to lift up his eyes and see the areas. Previously, Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the river plains he liked. Lot could only get a small piece of rental property. But God promised Abram permanent possession of all the land he could see. Abram did not have to worry that Lot would take away some of the land from him. The second security was about Abram's offspring. God specified that Abram's future generations would be as many as the dust of the earth. Then God told Abram to walk around his future territory. He must be quite excited. It would be like going for a test-drive of a car you ordered. The manufacturer has yet to ship your car to the dealer. But at least you get a feel of the car you will own. You have to wait patiently for it. Abram must do the same. God's promises would not come soon. Abram and Sarai had no child yet, and the land was still occupied by Canaanites. But God gave Abram a preview of His future blessings in verse 18: **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 the Lord.** The oaks of Mamre and Hebron are about 2 miles apart. Abram later purchased a land at the oaks of Mamre to bury Sarai. Since then, it became a burial ground for his family. It was as if Abram made a deposit for his coming territory. As for Hebron, it was where David was enthroned. Perhaps Abram stayed there out of convenience. But God was working behind the scene. Abram made his decisions not by sight but by faith. Some non-believers think that faith in God is just a blind faith. While we cannot see God with our physical eyes, we can see Him with our spiritual eyes. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 – **17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.** Those who are saved will be in heaven for eternity. In the meantime, they still have to deal with the effects of sin. Their health will deteriorate. Satan will keep launching attack from all fronts. Compared to the great and everlasting glory in heaven, current struggles are light and brief. As such, we should shift our

focus from the things we can see to the heavenly inheritance we cannot see. Our faith must continue to grow. There are four building blocks for our faith. First, it is past history. God allows certain people to exist. They made certain decisions that led to various outcomes. This nation interacted with other countries. God will continue to orchestrate people and events to accomplish His plans. Second, our personal experience. God works in our world, and He also works in our lives. He gives each of us unique backgrounds, puts us in specific places at certain times, and allows us to meet with particular people. God guided us in the past and He will continue to direct our future. Third, our faith will be strengthened as we listen to people's testimonies. The same God also works in others' lives. He causes all things to work together for the good of those who love Him. The stories of other Christians can be encouragement to us. Fourth, ultimately we put our faith in the promises of God. Time will change but God's Word stays the same forever. He will accomplish what He says. There are countless promises in the Bible that show God is powerful and faithful. He will complete all that He has promised.

結論 CONCLUSION

Decisions will affect our destination. Abram and Lot chose different directions, that brought about contrasting results. Abram pursued God's promises by faith, while Lot chased after immediate gain by sight. Lot would not realize that he made a big mistake until disaster came. Wise planning is a good precaution. Many people lost everything in the Texas flood. But residents in a small community were spared. Comfort is a town of about 2,000 people. It is 40 miles from Camp Mystic, where some people lost their lives. Last year, the fire department of Comfort upgraded its emergency warning system. Some townfolks thought it would be a good idea to install a second siren. They found a cheaper way to refurbish an older system. More importantly, they moved the siren to the middle of the city and connected it to a sensor by the river. The alarm will sound when the water rises to a certain level. After they put the system in place, they organized test-runs so that people are used to the sound of the siren. All the efforts made a huge difference in the early morning hours of July 4th. Besides the siren, there were also warning messages displayed on TV and sent to phones. Moreover, firefighters went street after street asking people to evacuate. Many lives were saved because people took the warning seriously. God also give us a warning but in the form of an invitation. Those who receive Jesus Christ will not perish but have eternal life. Do not ignore His calling. Come to Jesus! As for our brothers and sisters: your role is a messenger. Go spread the good news and urge people to accept Jesus.

引言 INTRODUCTION

我們都曾經遇過以下的情況：你向左或向右，會導致截然不同的結果。有些時候，你有時間考慮不同的選擇。但是其他時候，你必須馬上做出決定。幾週前，德州聖安東尼奧地區發生了嚴重的淹水，超過 100 人喪命。願主安慰那些失去親人的家庭。有些人過世，但有些人想辦法活下來。你可能聽過一些驚險逃生的故事。有些人發現水從門縫滲進來，於是他們趕緊把家人叫醒。水流的速度太快，根本來不及開車逃生。於是，他們收集食物和衣服等必需品，衝到閣樓。許多人用拳頭打破牆壁，爬到外面。然後，他們冒著雨坐在屋頂上，等待別人在天亮時救他們。如果人們以別的方式回應，可能結果會不一樣。在今天的經文中，亞伯蘭和他的侄子羅得要做一個重要的決定。羅得想走捷徑，結果他得不到神的祝福。抉擇會影響我們的結局。在上週的經文中，亞伯蘭因為一個錯誤的決定，差點被法老王搶走太太。神在那場危機中保守了亞伯蘭。之後，他的家人回到了迦南。新的考驗會不斷來臨，磨練亞伯蘭的信心。他必須依靠神來克服那些挑戰。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 衝突的起因 Source of Conflict (v. 1-7)

當進入第 13 章時，又出現了另一個問題。讓我們看第 1 節到第 7 節來了解衝突的起因。亞伯蘭和羅得擁有太多的財產，以至沒有足夠的空間讓他們一同生活。第 2 節說亞伯蘭變得非常富有。他離開家鄉時就已經很富有了。此外，法老給了亞伯蘭牲畜和僕人作為對撒萊的補償。第 5 節描述羅得也有很多財產。亞伯蘭可能和他的侄子分享了一些財物。兩批人都需要水、食物，動物也需要吃草。緊張的氣氛逐漸升級為爭吵。衝突可能會引起潛在的危險，第 7 節給了一個暗示：當時，迦南人與比利洗人在那地居住...。神應許亞伯蘭會繼承那地。但當時迦南人仍然住在那裡。亞伯蘭和羅得應該聯手，以防當地人給他們找麻煩。這場衝突不只是管理的問題，而是不同心所引起的。人們在貧窮時會互相照顧，但在富裕時卻可能變得自私。如果亞伯蘭和羅得的僕人只顧自己的利益，合一就會瓦解。他們為什麼在異地？因為神應許要賜給亞伯蘭和祂的後裔那片土地，並且祂應許要透過亞伯蘭祝福別人。羅得享受到伯父給他的祝福。如果他向亞伯蘭學習跟隨神，就能繼續領受更多的祝福。可惜羅得的心態與亞伯蘭不同。第四節給了我們一個提示：...他又在那裡求告耶和華的名。亞

伯蘭回到先前築壇的地方，在那裡向神禱告。亞伯蘭有禱告的習慣，但我們沒有看到羅得禱告。禱告的人往往比較謙卑。他們懂得尋求神的心意，而不是自作主張。當然，真正謙卑的人會遵行神的指示。亞伯蘭和羅得都必須學會跟隨神的帶領。教會也是如此。如果兩個人之間尚且有問題，那麼在一個群體中豈不是更容易發生爭吵嗎？保羅在腓立比書 2:3-5 提醒我們信徒之間和睦的關鍵：
3 凡事不可結黨，不可貪圖虛浮的榮耀；只要存心謙卑，各人看別人比自己強。4 各人不要單顧自己的事，也要顧別人的事。5 你們當以基督耶穌的心為心。和睦唯有透過謙卑才能實現。重點不是誰聽誰的，而是每個人都必須聽主的話。在接下來的經文中，保羅說耶穌是我們謙卑的完美榜樣。萬王之王以人的樣式來到世上。祂選擇了僕人的卑微地位。耶穌以最羞辱的方式死在十字架上。祂做這一切是為了向我們認同，並拯救我們。祂看神的榮耀和我們的祝福比自己的利益更重要。我們要效法耶穌犧牲的榜樣，藉此操練謙卑。如果衝突的起因是自我中心，那麼最有效的解藥就是以別人為中心。否則，驕傲很容易打倒我們。就算在我們這樣的小教會裡，也有很多能人。我們應該看彼此為家人，而不是敵人。我們互相補足，而不是彼此競爭。局外人只會看到問題。唯有家人同心協力解決問題。站在旁邊批評是很容易的事。但你是否願意捲起袖子問說：「我能幫上什麼忙？」與其指責別人，不如伸出援手。我們要少說多做。功勞歸給誰並不重要，關鍵是別人得益處，而且神得到榮耀。

2. 衝突的解決 Solution to Conflict (v. 8-13)

兩群牧人之間發生了衝突。亞伯蘭於是向羅得提出一個解決衝突的方案。我們來聽**第 8 至 13 節**的經文。亞伯蘭比較年長，他應該先選擇。然而，他把權利交給了羅得。如果羅得選擇東邊，亞伯蘭就前往相反的方向。從此，他們二人就分開了。這意味著羅得將失去神的應許。注意羅得是如何做出決定的。再看第 10 節：**羅得舉目看見約但河的全平原，直到瑣珥，都是滋潤的，那地在耶和華未滅所多瑪、蛾摩拉以前如同耶和華的園子，也像埃及地。**羅得選擇了靠近所多瑪和蛾摩拉的約旦河平原。聖經學者對那個地方的具體位置有不同的意見，但他們普遍認為它位於死海附近。作者預告這兩座城市將來會被毀滅。我們在第 17 章和 18 章會看到有關的故事。作者在第 13 節告訴我們原因：**所多瑪人在耶和華面前罪大惡極。**羅得選擇那個地方是因為那裡土地肥沃，就像埃及一樣。羅得剛從埃及回來。尼羅河確保了持續的水源供應，這對維持生命至關重要。總而言之，羅得是基於觀察作評估。第 10 節說他「舉目看見」那地是好的。這個形容讓我們想起夏娃看到分辨善惡樹時的反應。創世記 3:6 記載：**於是女人見那棵樹的果子好作食物，也悅人的眼目...**夏娃喜歡她所看見的，因此她不理會神的明確警告，吃了那果子。結果，罪就進入了世界。羅得和夏娃都是憑著所看到的事情來做決定。關鍵是羅得只看到自己喜歡的東西，卻沒有

預見神的應許。因此，他追求眼前的結果，而不是神未來的祝福。最終，當神毀滅所多瑪和蛾摩拉時，他損失慘重。外表可能是主觀的，甚至是容易欺騙人的。撒旦清楚知道如何吸引我們的視覺。約翰一書 2:15-16 提醒我們：**15 不要愛世界和世界上的事。人若愛世界，愛父的心就不在他裡面了。16 因為凡世界上的事，就像肉體的情慾，眼目的情慾，並今生的驕傲，都不是從父來的，乃是從世界來的。**墮落的世界以三種方式吸引我們：好看的东西、好爽的东西和我們可以吹牛的东西。當你使用網路或打開電視時，到處都有這樣的例子。讓我們思考外表這方面。許多人因為憑著視覺來做決定，結果後來後悔了。他們可以把不合穿的衣服退回去，或是把不喜歡的車子賣掉。但接受一份工作或與某人結婚卻很難改變，甚至不可能改變。因此，我們應該用屬靈的眼光來評估各種選擇。我們需要問自己，某個決定會讓我們更親近神，還是讓我們遠離祂。它只是讓我們好看，還是能反映神的榮耀？它只能帶來短暫的滿足，還是能帶來持久的喜樂？買什麼手機或去哪裡吃飯可能都無所謂。你可以按照個人的喜好或參考用家的評語。你也可以向朋友請教。對於那些影響深遠的選擇，你必須尋求主的指引。神可能會在你禱告時提醒你相關的經文。你也可以向一些成熟的基督徒和敬虔的朋友尋求建議。他們了解你，也熟悉神的話。他們會告訴你一些你需要聽的話，而不是你想要聽的話。在考慮了所有這些因素之後，你就能做出更有智慧的決定。

3. 衝突後的保證 Security after Conflict (v. 14-18)

羅得帶著他的家人往所多瑪遷移。衝突結束後，神對亞伯蘭說話，給予他保證。我們讀**第 14 至第 18 節**。神重申了對亞伯蘭的兩個應許。首先，神會將土地賜給亞伯蘭和他的後裔。在第 14 節，神要亞伯蘭舉目觀看。之前，羅得看到他所喜歡河邊的平原。羅得後來也只能租到一小塊地。但神應許亞伯蘭，他所看見的所有土地都永遠屬於他。亞伯蘭不必擔心羅得會奪走他的部分土地。第二個保證是關於亞伯蘭的後代。神告訴亞伯蘭，他的後代會像地上的塵土一樣多。然後，神叫亞伯蘭在他將來的產業走一走。他一定很興奮。這就像試開你訂購的車一樣。雖然製造商還沒有把你的車送到車行，但至少你可以先感受一下你將要擁有的汽車。你需要耐心等待。亞伯蘭也必須如此。神的應許不會很快實現。當時亞伯蘭和撒萊沒有孩子，那地仍然被迦南人佔據。但神在第 18 節讓亞伯蘭預先嘗到未來的祝福：**亞伯蘭就搬了帳棚，來到希伯崙幔利的橡樹那裡居住，在那裡為耶和華築了一座壇。**幔利的橡樹和希伯崙相距約 2 英里。亞伯蘭後來在幔利的橡樹那裡買了一塊地來埋葬撒萊。從那時起，那裡就成了他家人的墓園。就像亞伯蘭為將來的領土預先下訂金一樣。至於希伯崙，那是大衛登基的地方。亞伯蘭可能出於方便而停留在那裡。但神在幕後作工。亞伯蘭做決定不是憑眼見，而是憑信心。有些非信徒認為對神的信心是盲目的信

心。雖然我們無法用肉眼看見神，但我們可以用屬靈的眼睛看見祂。保羅在哥林多後書 4:17-18 說：**17 我們這至暫至輕的苦楚，要為我們成就極重無比、永遠的榮耀。18 原來我們不是顧念所見的，乃是顧念所不見的；因為所見的是暫時的，所不見的是永遠的。**得救的人將永遠在天堂。但目前他們仍然要面對罪的影響。他們的健康會走下坡。撒旦會繼續從四面八方發動攻擊。與天上浩大而且永恆的榮耀相比，今生的掙扎是輕微且短暫的。因此，我們應該將注意力從看得見的事物轉移到看不見的天上基業。我們的信心必須不斷增長。我們的信心可以從四方面被建立起來。首先，是過去的歷史。神允許某些人存在。他們做出某些決定，導致不同的結果。這個國家與其他國家有互動。神會繼續使用人和事物，達成祂的計劃。其次，我們個人的經歷。神在世界中運行，祂也在我們的生命中工作。祂給我們每個人獨特的背景，在某些時刻把帶領我們到不同的地方，使我們遇見某些人。神過去引導我們，祂也將繼續指引我們的未來。第三，當我們聆聽別人的見證時，我們的信心會被堅固。同一位神也在其他人的生命中工作。神使萬事互相效力，叫愛祂的人得益處。其他基督徒的故事可以激勵我們。第四，最終，我們要信靠上帝的應許。時間會改變，但神的話語永遠不變。祂所說過的事情必然成就。聖經中無數的應許顯示神的大能和信實。祂會逐漸完成祂所應許的事情。

結論 CONCLUSION

抉擇會影響我們的結局。亞伯蘭和羅得選擇了不同的方向，導致截然不同的結果。亞伯蘭憑著信心追求神的應許，而羅得則追隨眼前的利益。直到災難降臨，羅得才意識到自己犯了一個大錯誤。明智的計劃是有效的預防措施。德州的淹水讓許多人失去一切，但一個小社區的居民卻逃過大難。康福特 (Comfort) 是一個約有 2,000 居民的小鎮，距離米斯蒂克營 (Camp Mystic) 40 英里。許多人在那個營地喪失生命。去年，康福特鎮的消防局更新了緊急警報系統。一些居民建議安裝第二個警報器。他們找到了一種便宜的方法來翻新舊系統。更重要的是，他們把警報器搬到市中心，並把它連接到河邊的感應器。當水位超過一定程度時，警報就會響起。系統安裝後，居民還組織演習，讓大家習慣警報器的聲音。所有這些努力在 7 月 4 日凌晨發揮作用。除了警報器的聲音之外，電視和手機上也播放了警告訊息。此外，消防員到大街小巷呼籲人們疏散。許多人躲過洪水，因為他們認真地對待警告。神以邀請的形式向我們發出警告。接受耶穌基督的人不至滅亡，反得永生。不要忽略祂的呼召。來信靠耶穌！至於我們的弟兄姐妹：你是傳達信息的人。要去傳福音，鼓勵人們接受耶穌。