

Abram Trusts God

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Date: 14 May 2017

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in the book of Genesis, Genesis chapter 14. And we're looking in a kind of brief way at the life of Abraham, but I suppose if we're going to home in on anything, it would say it's verse 19 where Melchizedek, and he blessed him, blessed Abraham and said, Blessed be Abraham by God most high, possessor of heaven and earth.

Blessed be God most high, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. Now in the last chapter, we saw the choices that had to be made.

And we saw that Abraham and Lot both made choices, and in fact, Abraham was very generous and he gave Lot the first choice. We saw that Lot made his choice very simply.

He lifted up his eyes and he looked all round, and he picked what his eyes made out were the best part, or what was the best part of the land. And so he journeyed in the direction of Sodom into a well-watered, everything looked so fertile.

There's no mention of Lot at any point asking God to guide him or to lead him or to show him what to do. He made his choice purely on what he could see.

[1 : 33] But we saw that Abraham, he lifted up his heart to the Lord. We read that Lot lifted up his eyes and he took, Lot just took for himself.

Abraham lifted up his heart to the Lord and the Lord gave him. Two totally different things. And that's where, if you remember rightly, where we finished last week or a couple of weeks ago, was that we should seek to follow the way that Abraham went.

The way that Abraham went. Because we are to lift up our heart to the Lord. And the Lord will lead us. The Lord will guide. And the Lord will give.

That's what he did. He gave to Abraham. And it's this theme that we find following right through. It's the Lord giving.

Abraham. Because Melchizedek terms God the most high possessor of heaven and earth. And Abraham himself, in verse 22, talks of God in this way.

[2 : 41] I have lifted my hand to the God most high possessor of heaven and earth. Abraham and Melchizedek had an incredibly high view of God.

They saw him as a God who possessed the whole earth. Everything belonged to him. And it was his to give. And it was his to withhold.

And that's why Abraham, when it came to the choice, he lifted up his heart to the Lord. And the Lord gave. That's why we must be in the habit of doing the same thing. And never losing the sight that Abraham had of the greatness of God and the ownership of God and the authority of God over our lives.

But we saw that Lot made a wrong choice. We saw that he moved in the direction of Sodom. And when we follow the journey of Lot, we find that it wasn't long until he had actually entered into Sodom, made it his place.

He lived there. And when we reach chapter 19, we find that he's actually in the gate of the city, which was the place that the elders of the city sat.

[3 : 53] It was like the council. It was where the decisions were made. So Lot, who was not long before, was outside the city, ends up becoming an integral part of the mechanics of the city.

And that's the way sin works. Because sin sucks us in. And I'm sure we're all aware of that as we look over our own lives. There are many things that we have found ourselves falling into.

And we've fallen in despite warning from God's word, despite the Holy Spirit convicting us of the wrongness.

We still find ourselves giving in. And that's why in the Bible it often tells us that we are to flee, to run from certain sins.

Joseph understood that. Remember how Potiphar's wife was trying to entice Joseph. And he didn't even wait to argue the case.

[4 : 56] He just said, you know, I can't do this against my master. And she then tried to persuade him. And he actually left his coat in such a hurry. Or the jacket, whatever he was wearing. He left it in such a hurry.

He ran. And he knew that that was the only way he could deal with it, was to run. Because if he had stayed, he knew that it would have been so easy to have been sucked in. And that's the way that sin worked.

And that's the way it worked for Lot. Because gradually he got sucked into the city of Sodom. And we know that it was an exceedingly wicked, we're told that in the Bible, an incredibly wicked city. Now, as we say, life is full of choices. We saw in the previous chapter, Lot and Abraham making their choice. And sometimes we wish life wasn't so full of choices.

Because all through life, we're having to make decisions. Sometimes when you're coming to the point where you're supposing you're in school and you're trying to work out in the latter years of school, what am I going to do?

[5 : 57] What do I want to do in life? And you try and take exams that will help you to go in the direction that you want to go. But sometimes, even when you do that, you're not sure what you want to do.

You might go away. You might not go away. You're just not sure. And I remember myself at that age, and I was thinking, oh well, once I decide what I want to do, that will be the end. It's not the end.

It's never the end. And you kept making, having to make choices. And our whole life is full of choices. And sometimes, naively, we think it wouldn't be great if life was just sort of set out before you, and that it was kind of mapped out, and it's like looking at a map, and you knew that's the way you were going to go, and it was all set out for you.

You might say to yourself, it would make life a lot easier. No, it wouldn't. It wouldn't at all. And God hides from us what is going to happen. And it's just as well, because some of the things that come into people's lives, I don't know if you knew that was coming.

Could you bear with it? But anyway, we don't know. But it's through our day-to-day journey in life that we have an opportunity all the time of learning to trust God, of depending upon God.

[7 : 15] Because life is a journey. And it's so important for us to get into the way of asking God to lead us, of learning to lean upon God.

It's one thing to say, I can talk about this, but I've got to ask myself, do I do that? It's all very welcoming here, and preaching and saying, but I have to ask myself, do I lean upon the Lord every day?

Do I make the Lord my pillar of strength? Do I make him my eye of guidance? Do I depend upon him for the turns and twists of life? Because it's so important.

And that's one of the wonderful things about Abraham's life. Yes, Abraham made his mistakes. He got it wrong sometimes. But the main thrust of Abraham's life was one of great faith, of our dependence upon God.

He did make his mistakes. He made catastrophic mistakes. But he was still a man of, great man of faith, and has been held up as the example of the father of the faithful.

[8 : 19] So here we are, we're on this journey, and we're all making decisions. And I suppose that's why high-flying executives are paid huge salaries, because they have to make huge decisions.

Because every decision carries with it an element of responsibility. And before we move on from this, let me say that the greatest decision, and we use that word wisely, but the greatest decision that we are ever faced with is what we do with Jesus.

It's like the question Pilate asked, what shall I do with Jesus? And it's a question you and I have to ask. It's a question that won't go away.

There is no place of neutrality with that. Because if we ignore it or neglect it, we've already made the decision to do nothing with Jesus. And the Bible tells us, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

So it is important that we make the right decision by accepting the Lord Jesus, by going to him and asking him, Lord, give me the faith. Give me the faith.

[9 : 27] Maybe today you're saying to yourself, how do I accept Jesus? Well, it's by faith. How do I get the faith? Well, you have to ask for the faith. Because faith isn't something that you can work up yourself.

It is by grace you are saved through faith. And the Lord will give you that faith that enables you to believe. Ask him, Lord, help me to believe in you.

So anyway, as we come to this chapter, and just move through it very quickly, we come to the first battle that's recorded in Scripture. And we probably wouldn't have heard anything of this battle were it not that it involved Abraham.

Basically, the battle began because four kings from outside Canaan, and there were the five kings from the area that Lot settled in.

And these city kings, the Sodom and Gomorrah and all these cities, had been subject to Kedileomer. And they had been paying tribute money to him every year.

[10 : 28] And for 12, 13 years, 12 years or so on, that's what they were doing. And then they decided, no, we've had enough. We want our independence. We're not going to pay any more. And, of course, he then gathers allies and he comes up to fight against them.

Now, Kedileomer had a smaller army than the five kings within the neighboring part where Lot was, and Sodom and Gomorrah and so on.

And what the king of Sodom and these decided to do was they would choose where they would have the battle, where they were going to fight. And they decided that they would fight out in the valley of Siddam.

They joined battle in the valley of Siddam. And it tells us here that Siddam was full of bitumen pits, or I suppose they were kind of slime pits or tar pits. And Kedileomer and his allies defeated Sodom, Gomorrah, and their allies.

And many, some of them fell into these pits and the rest ran away, and they were chased by Kedileomer. So the smaller army was defeated.

[11 : 41] The larger army was defeated by the smaller army. But the one thing that we can say about Sodom is that they were in no condition to fight.

Because they were soft. That's what we can say. They were soft as a people. And the reason that we say that is because the Bible tells us something about it.

Now, obviously, we automatically think about Sodom in the way of immorality or homosexuality and such like. But the Bible tells us, it's very interesting, when you go to the book of Ezekiel, it tells us there.

Because the Bible is an amazing commentary on itself. And this is what it says. That, behold, thus was the guilt of Sodom.

She and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease. But they did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty.

[12 : 42] And they did an abomination before me. So I removed them when I saw it. So you see here that this city had become obviously very prosperous, very wealthy.

And they cared for nobody but themselves. They oppressed the poor. When they would see people with need, they didn't care. They were completely unjust in their dealings.

There was no sense of justice or equality within the land. And they were given, there was no sense, there were no boundaries. It was a place of total immorality.

But it was this cry that ascended up. It tells us that the cry of Sodom ascended unto God. And that cry would be the cry of the victims.

Just as Abel's blood had a voice that cried to God. Society has a voice. And wherever there is a society that is oppressed, and where those in authority deal unjustly, and don't care for those who are poor and those who are needy, those who are in distress, God's judgment inevitably comes.

[14 : 00] You go right through the Old Testament, and you will find over and over and over again that the Lord passes judgment on a people who live purely for themselves, who totally ignore them, and who have no place, no time, for the poor and for the distressed.

Where the social system, where the whole social justice system collapses. And there is no thought or care.

And it's a serious thing. Sometimes we think, ah, it's no big deal. It's a huge deal. It's a huge deal in the sight of God. And you go through the Old Testament prophets, and you will find that this is one of the greatest condemnations God has upon nations.

It's injustice. It is refusing to help the poor and the needy. It's a serious thing. And sometimes we can look at these things and sort of try and push them aside.

We can't. Because God has declared his mind upon these things. And you and I know that the very, the Ten Commandments is summed up in loving the Lord with all our heart, our soul, our mind, our thing, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

[15 : 20] This is the demand of the law, is that there is to be a caring and a concern and a loving for those who are around and about us.

And so we find that Sodom was not ready to fight because they just lived in luxury. They, or a lot of them did.

Some of them didn't. Some lived in poverty. But a lot of them, they lived for themselves. They lived in this life of just enjoying life for the moment. So when you come to fight, you're not in any condition to fight.

You don't know anything about self-denial. You don't know anything about joining together the whole thing of being united in sort of what you might say, in brotherhood or whatever, I don't know. But the whole coming together as a team, as a one, as a unit, they didn't know anything of that because they were living just for themselves. And there's a lesson there too for the Christian because, you know, we can become soft because if we take our eye off the Lord and begin to live for ourselves, because, you know, it's very easy in the day that we're living in to live for ourselves and to become self-centered and concerned only with number one, not concerned about our neighbor.

[16 : 41] Who is my neighbor? Jesus dealt with that very powerfully in the Good Samaritan. And you remember that the Good Samaritan, it was a Jew that had been battered up, was severely mugged, who was left dying.

The priest and the Levite looked by and they said, no, I don't want to get involved. The Samaritan came along and it would be very easy for him to say, oh, a Jew. Oh, the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

He's the last person I'm going to get involved with. He brought that in himself. I have no way. And it's far too easy for us as well to look the other way, like the priest and the Levite, to save maybe if we see people in need.

They don't belong to the same church. They don't belong to any church. They don't, that doesn't come into it, into God thinking that doesn't come into it at all. The Good Samaritan, he did everything that needed to be done to get this man better.

And that's what we are required to do. And that is to love our neighbor as ourselves. It's this principle. And it's something of this that kicked in with Abram because the word had come that Sodom had been, all the people in Sodom and Gomorrah, they had all been captured and Lot had been taken.

[18 : 04] And of course, Lot was Abram's nephew. And Abram said, oh, I have to go. I have to go and rescue Lot. It would be very easy for Abram to say, oh, well, Sodom brought that on themselves.

I have had news from what Sodom's like. And as for Lot, he made a huge mistake going in there. Let him get on with it. That's not what Abram thought. Straight away, didn't work out the consequences.

He says, right, let's go. And he gathered all the people that were in his household. Now, as we know, Abram was a very, very rich man. Very wealthy. And he had loads of servants.

Men servants, maid servants. And we can see this massive household that he had because it tells us that there were so many people that were actually in his house, 318 of them.

Now, again, history will show us that many of the early battles in life, they weren't huge armies in thousands, but in hundreds. And obviously, the numbers here were not huge, huge numbers.

[19 : 09] But Abraham, obviously with the Lord on his side, defeats the Kedileomer and those who have taken away Sodom and Gomorrah, all the people and all the possessions.

And from verse 17, we find that Abraham is returning from that battle and he's met by two kings. Now, it's very important the way this works.

He's met by Melchizedek, who is the king of Salem and he's also a priest of the Most High God. Normally, the offices of priest and king were separate.

They were two different offices. And the Lord didn't allow these things to be combined. Uzziah, who was a good king, tried to offer and he insisted, even although the priest tried to keep him back in the temple, he insisted on offering and the Lord smote him with leprosy.

So it was a dangerous thing. But here is this man, Melchizedek, who was both a king and a priest. And that is, there's many references to Melchizedek and Jesus Christ.

[20 : 19] And this is one of them because Jesus held both the office of a priest and of a king. He is king ruling in our hearts, in our lives.

But he is a priest in that he offered and he himself was the offering for sinners. So this is, there are many references, or there are some references to Melchizedek in the New Testament and his type, as a type of Christ.

And this is one of them. It's the priest king, the one who rules and the one who offers. But you'll notice that he gives bread and wine.

He sets out bread and wine to strengthen and to encourage Abraham, not only for after the battle, but for what is ahead of him. And we also, though we can't take this too far, the Lord has also provided for us a provision of bread and wine, which is symbolic when we take it, but it is a reminder of what the Lord has done for us and it is to strengthen us as we go on.

But you'll notice that this man, Melchizedek, the translation of his name is righteousness, the king of righteousness, and he is also the king of Salem, which would be Jerusalem, which is shalom, which is peace.

[21 : 45] So we have here, he is the king of righteousness and peace, but you'll notice the order. That's important. It's not peace first and then righteousness, but it's righteousness first then peace.

And that's a great mistake so many people make is that they want the peace without the righteousness. Jesus is the prince of righteousness and there cannot be true peace until there is first the righteousness of Christ.

Cannot have it. Won't work. And that's a great mistake so many people make in life is that they search and they search and they search for lasting peace.

If we have peace only on the circumstances of life and how things are going, that cannot last because life changes all the time. and if we're basing the peace upon our circumstances and upon what we can do and what we can get and what we can achieve, it cannot last because life changes. We all know that. but if we have our peace built upon Jesus Christ, if Jesus is the basis of our life, if his righteousness has been made over to us, then the peace that we get in him is an everlasting peace.

[23 : 05] It is a peace forever. As we said, young poets, not just a lifetime guarantee of peace, it is a forever guarantee of peace.

And so, Abraham was being strengthened and encouraged by Melchizedek. Why? Because he had another trial just awaiting him.

Because the king of Sodom came to Abraham. And the king of Sodom, of course, was overjoyed that Abraham had rescued them. And he says to Abraham, write to Abraham, look, all I want are all the men, the women, children of Sodom.

Give them back to me. But everything, everything else, all the possessions, you can have them.

We're so grateful to you, so thankful. Everything is yours. We'll start again from scratch.

Now, in war, normally you are allowed to keep the booty or the loot or whatever. But Abraham saw this as a temptation because Abraham knew what the king of Sodom was like.

[24 : 10] He knew what Sodom stood for. And he says, I'm not going to take anything. What a temptation that was. Because here's this man and he's saying, look, I'm going to give you all this, all the wealth, all the silver, the gold, everything, all these possessions, all yours, Abraham.

And it looks like Abraham had already made a promise to God that he wouldn't take anything.

Because in verse 22, but Abraham said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted my hand to the God, to the Lord, God most high, possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not even take a thread or a sandal strap that is used.

I will not take one solitary thing. Imagine a thread. You can't get, somebody offered you a thread.

You can't get anything thinner or less than a thread.

Well, Abraham said, I won't even take a thread that belongs to you. Nothing. Why? In case you go away and say, I made Abraham rich. Abraham, and see, this is why Abraham keeps referring to the Lord God most high as possessor of heaven and earth.

Abraham knew that God owned everything. Everything belongs to the Lord. Tells us in Psalm 50 that the cattle on a thousand hills are his.

[25 : 31] I don't know the price of cattle. But if you start multiplying the price of cattle on a thousand hills, I would imagine it will come to a fair sum. And that's what it's saying.

Everything, ultimately, all the resources of this world ultimately belong to him. He's possessor of heaven and earth. And it's up to him. He can give. If God chooses to give and to enrich someone, he will.

And Abraham was being enriched by God. And Abraham didn't want anybody to turn around and say, oh, look at all your wealth. Where did all that come from?

He didn't want to be able to say, oh, well, some of this is from Sodom. Didn't want to have anything to do with Sodom. Everything. It was God who was going to enrich him. And he still goes seeing the hand of God in everything.

Are we like that today? Do we have that trust, that faith? Because God hasn't changed. He's still the same. And he can change your life. Maybe today you're, we use the expression, down in your luck.

[26 : 35] Maybe you're feeling you're saying, maybe you're going through financial problems.

Maybe you're going through work problems. Maybe there are just difficulties of all sort of things. Do you have a sense of God being the possessor of heaven and earth that he can change your circumstances like that?

He can give to you? You go to him and ask him. Because sometimes we tend to think of the Lord only in terms of spiritual things. And yes, we have to think of the Lord in terms of spiritual things. But he's the God of providence as well. You go to him and make sure that you are dealing with him and trusting in him for every single thing.

Because the Lord tells us that we are to bring everything to him in prayer. In everything. Every single thing. Because when Abraham had made a promise to the Lord, he actually involved the thread in the promise.

He said, I have lifted my hand. In other words, he made a vow to the Lord God most high, possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread of yours. Only you can give those who have come to help me, they can take some of it.

[27 : 48] I will take none of it. Are we today then looking to the God of Abraham? You know, some people say, what's the point in looking at these men and women that lived all these years ago?

Some people are very critical of opening the Bible and going back to look at these lives. Well, the New Testament makes it very clear that these, all the incidents that God has recorded in the Word of God are there as an example for us.

A spiritual example so that we learn from them. so that we're taught through their lives. They're there, there's a reason for them being there. And that's one of the great things as we go through life that we learn to trust the Lord more and more.

Let us pray. O Lord, our God, the God of heaven and earth, the possessor of heaven and earth, the maker of heaven and earth, we pray that you will be our God and that you will provide for us at every turn.

And we ask, O Lord, that you will make provision for those even today who might be struggling in life. Maybe people struggling financially or struggling with regard to work or lack of work.

[29 : 01] We live sometimes at difficult times and we ask, O Lord, that you will display your hand, open your hand and show people that you'll make provision in work and provide in every turn and that your people will be able to rejoice in you and they'll be able to say, this is the doing of the Lord and marvellous in our eyes.

O Lord, bless and pity us and shine on us with your face. Take us all home safely, we pray. Bless your blessing upon the cup of tea, coffee in the hall and ask, Lord, that you will do us good.

Be gracious to us and forgive us our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. We conclude singing in Psalm 32 and this is from Sing Psalm, Psalm 32, the tune is Arlington.

And we sing from verse 7 to the end. Psalm 32 from Sing Psalms.

It's on page 38. We sing from verse 7. You are my hiding place, O Lord, my true security. You keep me safe in troubled days.

[30 : 12] You circle me with joyful praise when you have set me free. I will instruct you by my word and guide you in my way. My counsel I will give to you. My eye will keep your path in view and watch you day by day.

Do not be like the horser mule which cannot understand. They must be curved and kept in check as bit and bridle turn their neck to go where you command. The wicked's woes will much increase, but those who trust the Lord his covenant mercy will surround.

You righteous, let your joy abound and praise the Lord your God. Psalm 32, 7 to the end, the tune is Arlington. You are my hiding place, O Lord.

Thank you. You are my hiding place, O Lord, my true security.

You keep me safe in troubled days.

[31 : 21] You serve me with joyful praise when you have sent me free.

I will instruct you by my word and guide you in my way.

My counsel I will give to you. My eyes will keep your path in view and watch you day by day.

You are my hope in the Lord's name. You are my hope in the Lord's name. You are my hope in the Lord's name. Lord's name. You are my hope in the Lord's name.

Lord's name. You are my hope in the Lord's name. You are my hope in the Lord's name. Lord's name. You are my hope in the Lord's name. You are my hope in the Lord's name. Lord's name.

[32 : 46] You are my hope in the Lord's name. You are my hope in the Lord's name. Lord's name.

You are my hope in the Lord's name. You are my hope in the Lord's name. He is my hope in the Lord's name. He is my hope in the Lord's name.

You are my hope in the Lord's name. Word. Word. Word.

Word. Word. Word. Word. Word. Word.

Word. Word. Word. Word. Word. Word. and your righteous end, your joy abound, and grace the Lord you call.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.