

Genesis 14:17-24 The One True King 1/21/18

After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). ¹⁸ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said,

*“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
²⁰ and blessed be God Most High,
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”*

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. ²¹ And the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.”²² But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, ²³ that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ ²⁴ I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share.”

(Pastor prays)

To be a man or a woman of conviction still means something, even in our society of fluid values and wandering loyalties. And when we meet a person with convictions, we respect that, even if we don't agree with those convictions. One of the cancers in the beating heart of Christianity is the profound lack of real and God-honoring convictions. That needs to change, and for some of you that supernatural change could happen today.

Today we take another look at Abram – a man who became a man of conviction. Let's move quickly in the story so we can get to the passage. Let's first go back to Chapter 12 and trace the story and then deal with this passage. Let's go back to God's call in Chapter 12:1-3, the effectual, life-changing call to trust God in faith. It happens at salvation.

So, from verse 4 forward we hear that Abram sets out with Sarai and his nephew Lot and all their possessions. He goes into Canaan, and in verse 7, the Lord speaks to him and promises the land to his offspring. He builds an altar and calls on the Lord. In verse 10 there is a severe famine in the land, so Abram goes to Egypt where there is food. As he and Sarai approach Egypt in verses 11-12, Abram does something dumb and cowardly. He asks Sarai to tell everyone that they are brother and sister because he is afraid he will be killed, and Sarai taken. She agrees to it and they get to town. All is great except that in verse 17 Pharaoh is struck by plagues because he has taken Sarai. In verses 18-20, Pharaoh gave Sarai back and sent them away.

When we get to Chapter 13:1-2, Abram is very rich and Lot is getting rich because of Abram. Verse 4 says Abram called on the Lord in the midst of plenty. He's growing as a man of faith, and wherever he goes he worships the Lord. After verse 5 we find out that Abram and Lot have so many animals and possessions that they need to separate in order to keep the peace. And although Abram is the reason they are so rich, he gives Lot first choice of the land in Genesis 13:9. Lot lifted up his eyes and made a tragic choice. Let's read it.

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.) ¹¹ So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other. ¹² Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. ¹³ Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.

He made a choice that made sense financially— and maybe socially— but he wasn't looking with the eyes of faith. The camera angle goes back to Abram in Genesis 13:14, and from there to the end of the chapter we see Abram strengthening as a man of faith and convictions. He's going to need it. In Chapter 14, we are introduced to war for the first time. I'll condense it to say that a confederation of Kings attacked Sodom and Abram's nephew got caught up in the battle and was kidnapped. In Genesis 14:13 a refugee finds Abram the Hebrew and tells him that his brother's son Lot is in grave

danger. He could be enslaved or tortured. So far, Lot hasn't been a stellar character and what Abram does next gives us our first point.

Our Convictions Form Our Courage

Let me show you what I mean by that. In Chapter 14, Abram's nephew Lot, his kinsman, is taken captive by the enemy. And Abram wasn't indifferent. He didn't say, "It's not my business" or "You made your bed, you lay in it" or "You reap what you sow." No, he doesn't do any of that. Instead, verse 14 says, *When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.* Abram immediately springs into action, going after his brother's son who has made a mess of things and is now captive to the enemy.

I'd like to make a one to one correlation. Far too often we see a brother or sister in trouble and don't do anything. A.W. Pink said, "How often does the word come that a brother is taken captive and we don't rush to his aid?" Even the Lord Jesus leaves the 99 and goes after the sheep that is strayed and doesn't rest until it's found. And our convictions must inform our courage and motivate us to reach people.

There are three areas of conviction that I believe give us the motivation. They are: the holiness of God, exclusivity of Christ and a quest for sexual purity.

Too often the call for help falls on deaf ears. Too often pride or "busyness" or fear keep us from risking shame or hurt feelings when we try to pull someone from the fire. Do you remember what Paul said about this very thing in the book of Galatians 6:1? *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.* Who is waiting on you to call? Reach out? To text? To check on or to pray over? I would just say for the sake of Christ and based on your convictions, get over yourself and unleash your Christ-centered convictions. Our convictions form our courage.

Our Convictions Guard Our Choices

In the text we read this morning, Genesis 14:17-24, Abram is returning from a great battle, a rescue mission. He and his men divided their forces and attacked at night. They defeated a federation of Kings and delivered his nephew Lot, and as he is returning

home. In the text, he is met by two profoundly different kings, two profoundly different kings who represent two profoundly different choices in life.

Verse 17 is where we meet the King of Sodom. *After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).* Sodom – even today we know that Sodom wasn't a good place. But it was an attractive place, trendy and indulgent, decadent and accommodating and also very addictive. That one king who came out to meet him will later make an offer to him that sounds reasonable but would've put him in Sodom's debt. We call it giving the Devil his due.

There's another king there that day and I'd like to point out a few things about that king. Let's read verses 18-20. *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.)* ¹⁹ *And he blessed him and said,*

*“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
²⁰ and blessed be God Most High,
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”*

Melchizedek is a fascinating person in the Bible who shows up again in Psalm 110 and in Hebrews 7. But we find out most of what we need to know in verse 18. He is an Old Testament “type” of Christ, illustrating Christ, pointing to Christ and pre-figuring Christ. He's doing in one verse what the Bible does in full: pointing to Christ.

In Verse 18, we first look at his name. Melchizedek. Hebrews 7:2 tells us his name means “King of Righteousness.” And also in verse 18 we find he is King of Salem (or Jerusalem). Again in Hebrews 7:2 we find out that King of Salem means “King of Peace,” King of Righteousness and again in verse 18 he is called the Priest of God Most High. It's the first time we see the word “priest” in the Old Testament.

Now put these titles together in a theological understanding: we have no peace with God because we are not righteous. The Bible tells us our righteousness is like filthy rags. We need the only one who has ever been righteous, Jesus Christ. We need Him to give us peace because He is the prince or King of Peace, and the way He does that is as our priest. He is the priest of the Most High God and the writer of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 10:11-12, *And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.* ¹² *But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,*

The finished work: Peace with God through the righteousness of Christ's sacrifice. Two kings in this text, two rulers in the world: The King of Sodom with all his worldly offerings or the King of Salem. The King of Peace. The King of Righteousness. The Priest of the Most High God. The one who lays down His life for His people. Come now to this King of Peace.

Today we celebrate this King through The Lord's Supper that symbolizes the atoning death of Jesus on the cross.

(Pastor explains The Lord's Supper and prays)