

The Work of Faith

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Preacher: Dr. Daniel Heeringa

[0 : 0 0] We've been blessed this morning. Wonderful music. If you have your Bibles, turn to Genesis chapter 14. Genesis chapter 14. If you ever wanted to know how to live out your faith, you know we're to be a people of faith.

What all does that really mean? I mean, where the rubber meets the road. How do you live that out? Hebrews chapter 11 is often called the Hall of Fame of Faith.

And it is a list of the heroes of the faith. And it is filled with examples of how biblical heroes trusted God in the midst of their circumstances.

Abraham is detailed there more than most on the list. Moses has a lot as well. Due to his mighty acts of faith, and the work of faith that we're talking about this morning in Genesis 14 is not listed there.

But it is well worth noting, and I'd like for us to pause for a few moments and just take it in, exactly what went down. The beginning of Genesis chapter 14 tells us that there was a war in the land.

[1 : 2 0] It mentions a leader named Cater Laomer. What a name. If I ever had a boy, that's what I was going to name him. Cater Laomer. I'll affectionately call him Cater this morning because I can't handle his name.

But Cater was hungry to advance the cause of his territory, which was Persia, mentioned here as Elam.

And he teamed up with what would become known as the Assyrians as well as those of Syria and a guy named Tidal.

And Tidal was the leader of a conglomerate of small tribes. The name that he was the king of means many nations.

And so to me, it sounds like if he calls himself the king of nations that he might have had an inferiority complex of sorts because he wasn't from as big of areas as other folks.

[2 : 2 3] For 12 years, Cater had been ruling over several cities remotely. And in the 13th year, those cities got tired of it and they rebelled against him. And Cater and his posse went in and wiped him clean.

And the reason why that story matters is because it includes Sodom, where Lot was, Abram's nephew. And now Lot and his entourage has been taken.

And word gets to Abram. And I want you to watch what happens. We need some popcorn for this story because it's quite an account.

It's in Genesis chapter 14, beginning in verse 13. It says this, Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eschol and of Aner.

They were allies of Abram. When Abram heard that his kinsmen 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.

[3 : 39] And he divided his forces against them by night. He and his servants and defeated them and pursued them to Hoboth, north of Damascus.

Then he brought back all the possessions and also brought back his kinsmen, Lot, with his possessions, and the women and the people. What Abram does here in response to this need is what I see as the first of three moves that you'll see throughout the rest of this chapter that speaks to how you work out your faith in real life.

I want you to see this morning a person of faith and putting that faith at work, working out his faith.

The first is found in the passage that I just read. To put our faith to work, we rescue the oppressed.

We go after those who are hurting. To fully appreciate what Abram had done on behalf of Lot, you need to understand their relationship because their relationship was not a good one.

[4 : 57] They were separated due to conflict. They had large entourages, estates that traveled together, and they fought over the land, and the herdsman got to fighting, and so they divided themselves.

And when they did, Abram told Lot he could go anywhere he wanted to, and he'd go the opposite way. And Lot tried to take advantage of Abram. He picked the best land that he could go to from his eye.

We talked about that last week. Sometimes what you see is not what's best, and that's what he found out. Abram has no reason to be nice to Lot, let alone risk his life for it.

What Abram did was not only selfless, but it was gracious. But it also was one of boldness and courage.

So I want you to get this. Not only did he not hold grudges, not only was he not bitter, not only did he not have animosity toward Lot, but he also did what he did in the strength of the Lord.

[6 : 01] 318 people are a lot of people when you feed them around your table. But when you take them into battle against five nations, that's not a lot of folks. And here he's taking 318 people in.

It sounds to me like he was living out what Christ later would tell us to do. And that is in Luke chapter 6, 27 and 28. Jesus said, but I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

Lot had misused Abram. And he shouldn't have been in the trip to start with. But even though he went, he misused Abram. And how did Abram respond? He could have said, let him face it.

But he didn't. And you're going to talk about boldness. You're going to talk about courage. He took 318 men, divided them, and he hit this army from two different directions and drove them out.

Then he reclaimed Lot and all the people that came with him. And all of that, he didn't have to do. But he did it. That's boldness.

[7 : 07] It reminds me of a little guy named David that was just supposed to take a lunch to his brothers who were in a standoff at a battlefield line in a valley.

And instead, David refused to take Saul's armor. He refused to fight another man's battle. Instead, he knew that God had trained him with a slingshot and a few smooth stones to do what needed to be done.

And he walked into that valley against a nine-foot giant and said this, You come to me with sword and with spear and with javelin.

But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the enemies of Israel whom you've defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand and I'll strike you down and cut off your head.

And I will give the dead bodies of the host to the Philistines this day, to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord and he will give you into our hand.

[8 : 35] Hello. Braveheart don't have anything on David. Nor does he on Abram. And the 318 men that went with him to fight five countries, with the strength of the Lord, he stood up for an enemy and he rescued him from dying.

Do you catch that in the attitude of Abram? I mean, we need to catch the attitude of Abram. We have a message that is more powerful than an army of 318 men.

We have a message that will set people free. The battles that we fight are not physical. The battles that we fight are spiritual. The weapons that we pick up are not tangible.

They are spiritual. The promises that we look to are not locative. They're eternal. So we fight the battles of our day by standing on the right truth, by living for the Lord, by penetrating the enemy, by sharing his truth and sharing his gospel.

Because thank God he has power to save. The saving's not on us, folks. That's on him. The sharing is on us. We just have to share it. And yes, we often, so often we weigh it out.

[9 : 59] We wonder if it's worth it. Should I bother sharing with somebody? Abram didn't rescue Lot because of who Lot was.

Abram rescued Lot because of who Abram served. And we have the opportunity to be a part of the lost being rescued.

I think about an old hymn. I didn't like it when I was growing up and heard it. Just to be honest with you. But I didn't know what all of it meant. But over time, it speaks to me.

Rescue the perishing. Duty demands it. Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide. Back to the narrow way. Patiently win them. Tell the poor wonder a savior has died.

Rescue the perishing. Care for the dying. Jesus is merciful. Jesus will save. Abram rescued the oppressed by going to war to snatch them from the fire even though he didn't like them that much.

[11 : 11] You got family like that? You got neighbors like that? You got co-workers like that? Folks who don't like that much? I mean, you know. You don't hate them because you're Christian.

You don't hate anybody. But you can't stand them. I want you to understand our duty is not about the person or about the situation.

It's about the Savior. It's about the Savior. So what do we do as a work of faith? We rescue the oppressed.

We rescue the spiritually oppressed. Because people need the Lord. People need the Lord. If you can look at our country today and see what's happening in our world and you don't understand that the desperate need of folks more than anything else is the Lord.

He's the only answer, folks. I'm thankful when I hear what's going on on Asbury's campus. I don't know if you've heard about this. There's a wonderful revival happening apparently.

[12 : 19] And all weekend since Friday, there's been constant prayers going up in a chapel full of people praying and asking God to bring revival on this country and upon our world.

For right at 72 hours, constant. People are going to that area to see. May God bring revival. And may it start with us.

Because people need the Lord. Romans 10, 14 says, How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they've never heard?

And how are they to hear without someone preaching? We got a job to do. We got a job to do. We got to rescue the perishing. A work of faith is to rescue the oppressed.

But not only that, but in verse 17 through 24, we see there's a greeting and a congratulating of two kings. Both meant well for Abram and were appreciative to him.

[13 : 21] But Abram in response acknowledged one of them and didn't acknowledge the other one. It's interesting. It says in verse 17, it says, And his return from the defeat of Caterleomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom, went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveney.

That is the king's valley. And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram by God Most High and possessor of heaven and earth.

And blessed be God Most High who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything. Now I want you to notice the proclamation of Melchizedek.

He was giving praise to the God that he knew for he knew that God had delivered Abram and had watched over him. Melchizedek has a special name.

His name means king of righteousness. Here he is called the king of Salem. That comes from the word shalom, which means he's also the king of peace. So the man's name means the king of righteousness.

[14 : 41] And where he's from means the king of peace. Daniel says, excuse me, David says in Psalm 110 that the coming king will come through such a priestly order.

When he says the coming king, he's speaking of Christ coming. I want you to listen to Hebrews chapter 7, verse 1 through 3 because Melchizedek's an interesting cat and we got to figure it out somehow.

So I want you to see this. Hebrews chapter 7, verse 1 through 3 says this. For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him.

And to him, Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is king of peace.

Listen to this. He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the son of God, he continues a priest forever.

[15 : 46] Wrap your head around that. Melchizedek was a king and a priest without beginning or end. We at least see here a foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ himself in Melchizedek.

And possibly we see a pre-incarnate Christ. Abraham honors the Lord, whether a representation or whether the Lord himself, he honors him.

The bread and the wine that is offered, you know what that symbolizes. You know what that foreshadows. It foreshadows the body and the blood of Christ. The title that he gives is intended to honor God.

And I want you to notice what Abraham's response is. He gives him a tenth of everything. Because you know what? You can't honor God with your hands in your pockets.

You can't do it. You have to serve him. You have to honor him. You have to even fight for him. And you have to be generous to the Lord. God sure has been generous to us.

[17 : 00] And it's not an attempt at payback because we can't pay him back. You can't pay God back for what he's done for you. You just live for him with all that you have and all that you are. Hands out for God.

And as Melchizedek gave that honor to God, Abram gave honor to Melchizedek. We work our faith by rescuing the perishing and rescuing the oppressed, but we also work out our faith by revering the godly.

And that's what we see here. We see him revering the godly, holding up what's right, paying attention to what's correct. But don't stop there. I want you to notice one more thing.

It says in verse 21, and the king of Sodom said to Abram, remember now these two kings came out to welcome Abram and thank him for what he did for them.

Melchizedek, he gave a tenth of everything that he had. And then the king of Sodom came out. And he said to Abram, give me the persons, but take the goods for yourselves.

[18 : 07] For Abram said to the king of Sodom, but Abram said to the king of Sodom, he said, I've lifted my hand to the Lord God most high, possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread, this is kind of animate.

Or a sandal strap, or anything that is yours. Lest you should say I made Abram rich.

I'll take nothing but what the young men have eaten and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eschol, and Mamre take their share.

Friend, I want to be clear about something. When you live by faith, you don't put your confidence in the things of the world.

If we're to work out our faith, when we are working out our faith, we revere the godly, but we refuse the wicked. We've got to make a decision to refuse the wicked.

[19 : 11] I want to show you this. Not only did he rescue the oppressed and revere the godly, but he also refused the wicked. When the king of Sodom came to acknowledge Abram, we find what Abram is really made of.

The king told him, thank you for saving me. Whatever you got from the battle, keep the spoils. They're ours. They took them from us. But you keep them as an appreciation for what you've done.

The king of Sodom just wanted his people released. However, Abraham knew the man and he knew the land and he knew he was dreadfully sinful and he refused that kind of agreement.

He wanted nothing to do with it. He would not bow to wickedness. Abram's concern was not money. It was taking care of the people and staying right with the Lord.

And he would not make a partnership with the wicked. He said, I don't want anything that you have because I don't want you getting any credit for it.

[20 : 13] Because you know who gets the credit for this battle? God gets the credit for it. And God will provide my every need. Friend, listen, if we're concerned about God getting the credit, we'll be in great shape.

But things get done in a mighty way for the glory of God when people do what they do for the glory of God and not for the glory of themselves. Most people want what the world offers them.

They look like they are surrounded by wonderful promises when in reality the world delivers little. It don't pay.

I want to encourage you today to instead look to what God would have. To live by faith. To work out your faith. How do you work out your faith?

I believe Abraham's given us three examples of how to do that. One, I believe let's rescue the oppressed. This world needs Jesus Christ and we need to tell folks about Christ.

[21 : 10] We need to trust the power of the gospel. It ain't in our persuasion and ain't in our great elegance. Instead, it is in the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let's share the gospel. Let's rescue the oppressed. Let's revere the godly. What's of God and what's right? Let's hold that up. Let's make that what we look to. And then, bless God, let's refuse the wicked.

You know what that means? That means quit compromising. Let's not compromise. Because I'm going to tell you something. When you work out your faith by sharing it with others, by revering what's right with God, and by refusing what's wrong, God honors such as that.

God blesses such as that. God will impact your life when you trust him. If you want to know how to work out your faith, Abram teaches you how to work out your faith.

When you're in the midst of the battles, you trust the Lord and hold him up. With every head bowed, and every eye closed, I asked this morning, is there anybody here who's never accepted Christ Jesus as their Lord and Savior?

[22 : 30] There's never been a time when you ask him to forgive you, and to cleanse you, and to come into your life? And right now, if you were to stand before him, and he were to ask you, why should I let you into my heaven?

You don't really have a good example. You don't have a good word to say. And if you could try to say anything except that I've given my heart and life to Jesus, you'd give the wrong answer. You've never surrendered your life to Christ.

I'm thankful today's the day of salvation. You can come today. I'd love to guide you in that. Maybe you're here, and your faith is struggling.

You're a Christian, but when you look at your life, your faith is struggling. You're not revering what's godly. You're not rejecting what's wicked.

You become too enamored with the world, and it's invaded your life some. And today you need to say, Lord, I ask you to let me start over.

[23 : 34] Let me clean up what's wrong in my life, and things that I can't make right, Lord, will you make them right? Maybe you're here, and God's drawing you to this fellowship.

He'd have you join us in the journey along the way. You come. We'd love to guide you through that process. Or maybe you've made a private decision for God, but you've never made that public.

You've never told anybody about a personal commitment that you made to Christ. You come today. Let folks know. Honor God in that way.

Lord Jesus, it's one thing to read about an account of somebody else who was in a bad spot, or saw somebody in a bad spot, and was willing to put it all on the line in order to help them.

It's one thing to read about that. It's another thing to do it. We live in a world, dear God, that so desperately needs the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I believe that the mess that we're in, and that we see going on, and the confusion in our world, is just because folks need Jesus.

[24 : 44] They're looking for answers everywhere else, but they just need Jesus. And I just pray that you'll help us to be diligent to share that. Help us, oh God, to live it out, to make the decisions in our lives that we need to make that would honor you, to watch you work and move in us as only you can, dear Father.

God, today, may today be a new day, a new start as needed, Father, walking with you by faith.

We love you, and we thank you, Lord, for the love that you have for us. Lead us right now, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.