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Genesis

Chapter 14 - God's Gracious Deliverance

Fighting to Let Go (vs. 13-16)

Genesis 14:13-16: Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram. When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people.

I've often asked myself, why are certain passages of Scripture in Scripture? Why are certain events recorded, and other events not? I mean, John clearly puts it in the Gospel of John, "If I had recorded everything, the world could not contain the things that were done." And nevertheless, these specific things were written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ and in believing you might have life in His name. There is a reason for everything that is written. Unfortunately, when we read Scripture, it's oftentimes with academia or textbook eyes in which we begin to dissect certain things within the passage. As Paul so aptly put it in 1 Corinthians 2, "eye has not seen" "ear has not heard"; it hasn't entered in your heart. You can't figure this stuff out. What you can figure out is by the power of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God reveals these things to you, and you have to keep coming back to the foundation of Who wrote this. And we believe, as Scripture tells us, that it was the Holy Spirit who wrote this. Now, as the New Testament so aptly puts it, the

Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God's Son. So, let's put it another way, God's Son wrote this. You read in John 1, that “in the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God.” “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” What we realize is that God had created all things and is proclaiming all things in the realm of His Son's intent, which is what? To save. This is why at the end of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is talking to those on the road to Emmaus and then ultimately to His disciples who are trying to hide, not knowing about the fullness of His resurrection, and He finally comes to them, and He goes, “Let me explain to you the Old Testament, that all of this was written about Me.” And you begin to realize that if you're not seeing this from the eyes of Christ, you're missing the point.

So, oftentimes people read passages such as this, I was looking at an article not too long ago that was in reference to this narrative of Genesis 14, especially as you look in verses 13 through 16 that we're going to be looking at today, in which Abram is going into this battle

and is winning victoriously, and their statement on it was that God was testing Abram's strength. And I said to myself, "Okay, they couldn't be further from the truth." Because God is not testing Abram's strength. God is testing Abram's faith, and it's his faith that, as James 1 says, God is bringing these trials and these tribulations in your life to test to see if you want to have a relationship with Him. Clearly, God has revealed His desire to have a relationship with us, and He created all things for us. Not one good thing does He withhold. When you consider "every good... and perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of lights with whom there is no variance or shadow of shifting." God has no ulterior motive in creating the things that He created except to give you good. Nobody's twisting God's arm. God could have said, "Every horrible thing, every terrible thing I've given you, enjoy." But he didn't. He said, "Every good and perfect gift I've given you, and this is My desire for you." And all the way through, we see God's desire in doing that, in rescuing Noah, in calling out Abram. In fact, as you look at the calling out of Abram, what you begin to realize is that this was all

to bless Abram as well as to bless the world. The promises of God are many throughout Scripture, and He didn't have to give us a promise. I mean, He created us. That should be good enough. But all the way through, He's given us these promises.

And when He gives those promises to Israel, they're promises like, if I can just give you a few, Exodus 6:6, “... ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage...’”

That particular promise is telling them that He's going to do it. And if you remember the circumstances in it, it was all God that did it. I mean, you have these people that are, maybe bricklayers, but they don't have any weapons and there's no way to defend themselves, and it was a miraculous deliverance by God. No doubt about it, was God who did it.

There's a passage in Deuteronomy 23:14, it reads this way,

(Deuteronomy 23:14) “Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies...”

Who is it that's going to defeat your enemies? Well, according to that particular passage, it's going to be the Lord.

I like this one in particular, Deuteronomy 32:39.

It reads this way,

(Deuteronomy 32:39) “See now that I, I am He,

And there is no god besides Me;

It is I who put to death and give life.

I have wounded and it is I who heal,

And there is no one who can deliver from My hand.”

I don't know if you caught the breadth of that particular passage, but it seems to be telling me that He's in total control. I mean, Isaiah 43:11 would say, “There's no Savior beside me.” Now, I know the world will say, “We saved somebody.” And congratulations, but who gave you breath to do it? Who created you? So, there's no salvation apart from God. In Him we live and breathe and have our existence. If, in fact, God willed it so, all

He had to do was inhale, and all of your breaths that are in you would cease, and you would cease. Scripture says, stop regarding man whose breath is in his nostrils. It's the Spirit of God that keeps him alive, no doubt. But it's hard for us to grasp, and I think this is much of what this passage is about. It's hard for us to grasp the omnipotent sovereignty of God, the all-powerful control of God in our lives. It's just hard for us to imagine, because first of all, we're such control freaks, but beyond that, to imagine that there is a God that controls everything, I mean, how impossible is that to grasp that He has this unilateral control, unrestrained authority to do whatever He wants to do? It's kind of a word that's used in the New Testament, “*exousia*,” which simply means uncontrolled authority. There's nobody that controls Him. He has the authority over everything and over every power.

So, when you think about the promise that God made Abram at the very beginning in chapter 12 as He calls him out, the promises that He makes are, and let me just kind of read them to you,

(Genesis 12:2) “And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing.”

So, those are the promises. Now, if you If you recall the text, that's all God. There's nothing in there that's Abram. That's a promise that God is making to Abram. This is going to happen. Nevertheless, we can't help but come to a conclusion that what God really means is He's giving us this promise based on the contingency, or if I can put it on these grounds, the provision that Abraham is somehow going to do his share. So, the way we think of it, and obviously the way Abram thought of it initially was that “God's going to bless me. He's going to make me a blessing. He's going to make me a great nation. All these things are going to happen as long as I keep myself alive. I mean, I've got to keep myself alive.” But we know that because, once again, the first thing that happens when he goes to the Promised Land is a famine comes to the land, and he goes, “I've got to get down to Egypt.” So, that's his

strategy kicking in, and then when he gets down to Egypt, he's worried about the Pharaoh, and he goes, "Look, he's going to kill me if he finds out that you're beautiful and he wants to take you as his wife, so we're going to pretend like you're my sister." And all this strategizing begins to reveal that he's strategically maneuvering through this territory in order to preserve his life. In other words, "God's promises are contingent upon my ability to be strategic. It's upon my ability in some way to avoid, hopefully, making stupid decisions. As long as I don't make any stupid decisions, God's promise is going to, you know." And what's so wonderful about the passage is that what it's going to begin to reveal to us is, no, promises of God matters not what you do. If God made a promise, He's going to keep it. Now, there are promises that He makes that are contingent upon certain things that you do. But there are also promises that He gives us that have nothing to do with you. This is why the whole concept of salvation is so important to us, because salvation is just simply a promise of God. And He says, "You believe that this is true, and I'll save you." And we go,

“Yeah, but what if I do this?” He goes, “I said I'd save you. So, I love you so much that if you'll believe, whoever you are, that you'll have everlasting life.” And as Romans clearly puts it, and the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable, if He made a promise. So, it's not based on how good you are, it's not based on your ability to keep yourself good, although if there's a true change in your life, you're going to be demonstrating a desire to be like Him. Nevertheless, that's not what keeps you safe. He saved you and He'll keep you saved. He made that promise. So, it's a wonderful commitment that He makes.

So, as you go through, man is trying to think through, “How am I going to do this?” And in some ways, he does this with Lot as well. Because as you remember, at the very beginning, God calls Abram out and He goes, “Now, I'm calling you out. What I want you to do is leave your family. I want you to leave your relatives. I want you to leave your father's house.” I don't know how many ways you can say it, but I think He covered the bases. “Don't bring your family with you.” Who does

he bring with him? Lot, his nephew. Now, part of this is, and I would say, a sense of responsibility that he has. I mean all these, when you consider caring for people, there are these words that come into our mind like responsibility and obligation and all these things which are honorable things. There's nothing wrong with those things. Nevertheless, if God tells you to do something, you need to do what He tells you to do because we believe that if God is love, then His way is more loving than yours. Now, you may not be able to see it at the time. Nevertheless, I don't know who in their right mind would stand in front of God and go, "I think I'm more loving than You are." Now, we oftentimes act that way, but I don't think that if you were in your right mind, you would say that. And yet, here again, the whole thing of contingency begins to work on, "God's going to bless me. He's going to make me a great nation."

Now, once again, we'll kind of put in this caveat. When Abram was called, we go back into Genesis 11, that we realized that his wife could not have children. "Okay, so how are You going to make me a great nation? How's

that going to happen?” Okay, we start forming these contingencies. “I know. He's going to use my nephew. That's why I got to bring him along with me.” So, we began to think, of course, ultimately, he actually begins to think that maybe it's one of his servants that's going to bring, and he states that. But that's man trying to work through the promises of God. “God's promise is contingent upon me doing something.” And God says, “No, what I'm asking you to do is believe Me.”

I keep taking people back to that wonderful text in John 6 where Jesus was with the multitudes and He feeds them and they turn to Him and they go, “What is it that God wants us to do?” He goes, “Believe.” And here we sit and we go, “Is that all?” Let me just say this about faith, to me, it's almost impossible to appreciate or even to grasp the intensity of how personal this thing called faith is. The more I dig into it, the more I realize this is a very personal thing between you and God, and He actually is expecting you to do it. Now, it's something that's not really based on the merit of who I am, the prowess of my spirituality. A child can believe.

But He is expecting you to do it, and He is expecting you to do it wholeheartedly. James 1, I mean, look, you say you believe, don't be like the surf of the sea. Don't think that you're going to receive anything from the Lord if you're unstable in your faith. So, as we come to this, we begin to realize that far from a natural inclination, we often shun the very thought, I think, of the true meaning of what it actually means to believe. So, the whole life of Abram is we're walking through understanding what God means by, "I want you to believe."

Romans 4 uses Abraham as that paragon of faith. But he wasn't initially, and this is important to realize, and the things that he does, he's working through, "What exactly does it mean to completely trust in God? It means that maybe I help Him out?" You know, it's a phrase we oftentimes hear, "God helps those who help themselves." Which is not Biblical, by the way.

Nevertheless, we think in those kind of terms because there has to be something of me in this. And God goes, "There is. It's called believe. Put your trust in Me." So,

as we come to this, we begin to realize that man has a tendency to compensate, to sometimes overcompensate for his deficiency, his inability to do something or to make something happen. "I can't have any children, so this is what's going to happen, and this is how it's going to happen." And ultimately, as we know the story goes, God goes, "No, it's going to be through you, and it's going to be through your wife, Sarah, who can't have children, but she's going to have children." And you're going to say, "Oh, really? She's 75." "No, we're going to wait until she's 90, and we're going to wait until you're 100." But it's God proving Himself and it's Him calling Abram to believe, "I'm going to make you a great nation because you trusted in Me, not because you're a great person, but because you trusted in Me."

So, what does Abram had to deal with right off the bat? Well, he had to deal with the famine right off the bat. Then as you go on, he has to deal with, there's a problem with Lot and they're now becoming disagreeable. Look, you oftentimes find that your

solutions create more problems. “Why are we having all these family problems?” “Did you do what God said?” “No.” That might be the reason. So, you have these difficulties. So, Lot, they had to separate, and God says, “Finally.” So, then He talks to Abram and He goes, “This is what's going to happen.” Now, it's in the midst of all this that Abram goes, “Okay, I get it. You're in control. Would You mind if I moved close enough to where I can see Lot from where I'm living?” So, he moves in the oaks of Mamre, and from there he can see Sodom and Gomorrah. And he goes, “Okay, now I can kind of keep an eye on him.” And what do you think he's seeing on this given day? Well, he's seeing an army coming down from the north and taking him in, and he's going, “Did they get Lot?” And just to remove all doubt, a guy comes up and he goes, “They got him.”

This is where we pick up, if you look with me,

(Genesis 14:13) “Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew...”

That is a fugitive, that somehow escaped the group of people that were coming down and taking everybody

captive from the north, from Ur of the Chaldeans, from Assyria, all that particular region.

“Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre...”

Why is Scripture telling us this? It's his bird's eye view of what's going on. So, Scripture wants us to know exactly where he's living and why he's living there. To keep an eye on Lot.

So, it goes on to say,

“... the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram.”

And as they come together, Abram begins to go, “Okay, we’ve got to do something.” Now, the interesting thing about verse 14 is it lets us know that there are these things called visuals and audible, and credible revelations that come to us that just scream out, “You need to do something.” I mean, you hear about something; look, it's one thing to think responsibly and to have a sense of obligation, to be conscientious, dedicated, and devoted to people. That's a good thing to do. But when your family's involved, then all of these

feelings go up exponentially. Your family's involved. And then you begin to hear something like “kidnapped”. I'm just throwing out some key words. “Kidnapped, thieves, life's in danger,” and I don't know how you're feeling, but I'm feeling pretty intense at this moment. How do you think Abram's feeling? We know that he has a sense of care for Lot, and he's concerned about him. So, there's a stirring clearly, and it reads in verse 14, (Genesis 14:14) “When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive...”

How would you feel? Everything starts kicking in, “These are drastic times. They call for drastic measures, right? We’ve got to do something. We can’t just sit here. I mean, it wouldn't be responsible. It wouldn't be conscientious,” and you go through all the different words. And these feelings of being protective and rescue just, I mean, they just naturally begin to call upon you.

Abram heard these things that his relatives have been taken captive. So, what does he have? Well, the way I read it is he's got a plan. I mean, it's like he immediately

devises a plan. What's the plan? "Come to God. We'll beckon Him." I mean, what does Proverbs 3:5-6 say? "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He'll direct your paths." I don't think we're doing that. Now, here again, people will read this and they'll go, "Victory!" Because he actually wins the battle. He wins the battle. The question is, when you're reading this, what's the goal? That's the question you have to ask yourself. Is the goal to win all the wars? Is that the goal? Because if that's true, Jesus did a lousy job. Jesus got nailed. I don't think that's the goal. See, the goal isn't to win the war. The goal is to trust in God. See, that's going to be the whole goal all the way through. Nevertheless, Abram hears these things. He pulls the men together. I like the fact that it actually gives the number. He's got 318 guys that he has kind of trained. That's a good little troop. However, you've got 4 to 5 kings that are coming from the north with their whole entourage. They've already wiped out giants. They've wiped out the Amorites. They've wiped out the Amalekites. You're just 300 men. Abram's thinking,

“318.” Okay. So, he goes and pursues. I mean, they're already done. God actually kept them from attacking Abram. They're already done. They're going home. And they're all the way back almost into Syria, on the outer skirts of Israel. They're about 150 miles to the north of where Abram is, and he chases them, 150 miles to the north, and he goes, “I'm going to get you.” And he's smart enough to devise a plan, not only in the fact that he breaks into two groups or breaks into groups, but then on top of that, he's going to get them at night. How do we know that? It says it.

(Genesis 14:15) “He divided his forces against them by night...”

Josephus, a historian of the Jews, actually writes, he waited till they were all drunk. So, he goes in there and all his men just begin to slay them as they're drunk and fast asleep or whatever.

And it says,

“... he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah...”

Which is, by the way, about another 136 miles. I don't know. We read something like this, and we go, “Yeah, he just got in his car.” That's a long way.

“... and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus.”

That is in Syria.

(Genesis 14:16) “He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people.”

Now, once again, I just want to emphasize, and we talked about this last week, But God had not called Lot, and by Lot coming, he goes into Sodom and Gomorrah, which is actually literally at this point in time the worst place on the earth to be. He couldn't be less safe than where he is in Sodom and Gomorrah. And you have to ask yourself, “Is God in control of this invasion?” Is God in control of that? So, the God Who's in control of the invasion begins to wipe out all the enemies of Abraham. He then uses those that are invading from Ur of the Chaldeans where Lot was from originally, and they're taking him back home. Well, as we talked about

last week in particular, where they have these laws that are of higher standard than most people in the world at that particular moment in time. So, he's going back to a place which is better for him, and Abraham goes, "No, you're not. I'm going to save you." And so he does. And so the silence of God is deafening. We go, "So, why are You doing this?" And God says, "Because I said I would bless Abram. I said that I would make him a blessing. And his decisions, in spite of himself, I'm going to come through in this." And you begin to see God working. Now, here again, what God is going to do, He's not finished with Abram. See, we think, "Well, Abram won the battle. This is good. This is good." Of course, he'll come before Melchizedek, and Melchizedek goes, "God delivered you. You do know that? I mean, 318, come on, what are you, nuts? God delivered you." And Melchizedek is very clear on that. But the point of all this is God is bringing Abram to a relationship with Him to where he'll trust Him. Now, what Abram is having a hard time doing is trust God to fulfill His promises without his help, and he's believing that in some way, Lot's going to be perhaps the solution, so he's got to

keep him protected and kind of keep him around, in order to fulfill a promise. And you have this interesting picture of kind of a parental control in which, “I've got to make things happen.” And God is going to gradually cause him to let go. Because really, this whole battle is a battle that he's fighting to let go of his control, and God's going to do this.

I'm going to show you how He's going to do it as we go through. But let me just mention, just like I said, I always like reading the end of the story. So, let me kind of give you some of the end of the story stuff. As you go through, what you're going to see is he's going to have to let go of Lot. How's he going to do that? Well, Sodom and Gomorrah is going to be destroyed, and Abram's going to realize on this particular day, he can't save him. I mean, how do you save somebody from the wrath of God? How do you do that? The day's going to come when everybody's going to realize, “I can't save them anymore.” Does God let you go through realms of, “Hey, I rescued this person, I did this person”? Oh yeah. In His grace and in His love, He lets you think

you're Superman. But the time comes when you go, "I don't think I can rescue that one." And so, he begins to dialogue with God in the conversation, "If there are just 50, if there are 40, 30, would You save?" And He goes, "I'll save." And Abram realized that if the God of all the earth will do right, and you can feel him letting go of Lot and going, "You take care of him, I can't handle this kid anymore." And what God will do is Abram will begin to manipulate, remember, Sarah says, "What you need to do is have relations with my servant girl, Hagar, and then we'll have a child, and through this child you'll be a great nation." And Abram goes, "Okay, I guess we'll work it out for God again." So, he goes in there and jumps in. They have this kid named Ishmael, and the time comes where God ultimately gives him that child, Isaac, and his wife, Sarah, says, "This kid has to go." And Abraham goes, "Son, you've got to go." One of the most difficult times of his life. Something that he invented, something that he created, a way that he went wrong. And God goes, "Abraham, I just want to let you know I heard the kid crying. I'm going to take care of your kid for you. I'm going to take care of the

problems that you create for you.” But what Abram's realizing is that every time he puts his finger in the mix, it creates more sorrow and more pain. Did God shut him out at that juncture? No. Why? Because God promised He was going to bless him, and God will take him to the extremity of this, to the point in which he'll literally have to lay his only son on an altar, and not only will he not be able to save him, he's told to put the knife in him, and God says, “Do you trust Me?”

There's a wonderful passage in the Old Testament, 1 Samuel 30, that is in many ways parallel to this. Once again, I'm probably running out of time. But if you'll look with me in 1 Samuel 30, It is a time, just to give you a really quick synopsis, in which David has already been anointed king, but he's been dodging Saul. His thoughts are, “Saul's going to kill me, because God's not taking him out of the mix, even though He anointed me king. So, I might as well go over to the enemy.” And he literally goes over, here he starts off his life as a kid hitting the giant, of the Philistines, and now he's going over to the Philistines and joins the camp and says, “I'll

fight with you. I'll fight for you.” They get ready to go into a battle in which they're going to fight the Israelites. David doesn't fully know and understand this, but he says, “I'll war with you.” And the guy says, “You can't come with us. We think that your loyalties are with somebody else. You can't come to this battle.” And so, he walks away dejected. While he's having conversation with the enemy, trying to say, “I'm really good and you can trust me,” and try to go to the other side because he feels like, “Well, God's not going to do anything, so just to survive, I'm going to have to go over to the enemy.” While he's doing that, there are people that are going into the camp in which he lives and taking women, children, his women, his children, all of his men's women and children, and all of their goods, and taking them away. He doesn't know that. He finally comes and he finds all this happening. It gets so intense that he literally believes that the most loyal people in his army are going to stone him to death because of what he created. His decisions to try to work things out himself. What do you do when they're getting ready to hang you?

The way it reads is,

(1 Samuel 30:2) “and they took captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great, without killing anyone...”

By the way, Who do you think kept them from being killed? I mean, who comes in and burns the village and doesn't kill anybody? Who does that? I mean, that's got to be God protecting those people.

(1 Samuel 30:3) “When David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive.

(1 Samuel 30:4) Then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep.

(1 Samuel 30:5) Now David’s two wives had been taken captive, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite.

(1 Samuel 30:6) Moreover David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons

and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.

(1 Samuel 30:7) Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, “Please bring me the ephod.” So Abiathar brought the ephod to David.

(1 Samuel 30:8) David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I pursue this band? ...”

This is David. He throws rocks at giants. This is David. He goes after people. He doesn't run from people. He doesn't question whether he kills somebody or not. He just kills them. If there was ever a time to ask God, “Should I do this?” This would not be the time because they took his family, they took his kids. You don't want to take out time to ask anything. Go get them. David would not move a muscle until God goes, “You can go.” What God is looking for is for you and me to trust Him completely. That's the relationship. That's the goal. You might say, “Well, you know, I did this on my own and everything worked out okay.” Okay, fine. But God is bringing you to that goal of the relationship with Him, and He lets us make our mistakes, and how gracious

He is to oftentimes heal us from the mistakes that we make. Nevertheless, He keeps calling, and the day is going to come when you hit that wall and you go, “I can't do anything.” And He goes, “Now you're ready?” That's what faith is, and that's what victory is. Victory is you trusting Him completely.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we give You thanks for Your love for us and for Your calling and beckoning us. You want us to trust in You. You want us to trust our families to You. We believe that if our ways are pleasing to You, You make even our enemies to be at peace with You. We realize that the decisions that we've made oftentimes have just brought more turmoil and trial in our lives, but You have graciously sustained us through all of this. But lest we think in any way that this was an affirmation that we did the right thing, You give us passages like this to show us the journey of a man named Abram, a man that will ultimately trust you to a degree in which it's hard for us to fathom. You're

calling us today to trust in You, to not lean on our own understanding, in all our ways to acknowledge You. We do that today.