

# How to Live a Separate, Not Desperate, Life

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[ 0 : 00 ] We good? Hey! Ain't technology wonderful? Where's my bible? Alright, let me get myself sorted.

! Well, you know where to go. Genesis. Yay! Genesis. Now there's 50 chapters here. I hope you don't get tired of this in terms of me ranting on about God's goodness in Genesis. We get to see all these wonderful things that happened from way back and we're serving that same God, which is a pretty miraculous thing.

So the title of my message for this morning, How to Live a Separate, Not Desperate Life. And I want you to think about that with me as we read through chapter 14.

And it came about in the days of Amraphel, king of Shinar, Ariok, king of Elessar, Keter-Lamur, king of Elam, and Tidal, king of Goim, that they made war with Barah, king of Sodom, and with Bersha, king of Gomorrah, Shinab, king of Adma, and Shemeber, king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, that is, Zohar. All these came as allies to the valley of Sidim, that is the Salt Sea. Twelve years they had served Keter-Lamur, but the thirteenth year they rebelled.

In the fourteenth year, Keter-Lamur and the kings that were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashtaroth-Carneim, and the Zuzim in Ham, and the Emim in Sheva-Kairaetham.

[ 2 : 05 ] It's the best I can do with that one. And the Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El-Paran, which is by the wilderness. Then they turned back and came to En-Mishpat, that is, Kadesh, and conquered all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-Tamar.

And the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Adma, and the king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, that is, Zohar, came out.

They arrayed for battle against them in the valley of Sidim, against Keter-Lamur, king of Elam, and Tidal, king of Goim, and Amraphel, king of Shinar, and Ariok, king of Elessar.

Four kings against five. Now the valley of Sidim was full of tar pits, and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell into them. But those who survived fled to the hill country.

Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their food supply, and departed.

They also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions, and departed.

[ 3 : 18 ] For Lot was living in Sodom. 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 let out his trained men, born in his house, 318, 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.

So all the way up into what we have is Syria today. He brought back all the goods and also brought back his relative Lot with all his possessions, and also the women and the people.

Now this, verse 17, Then after his return from the defeat of Keterlemer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Sheba, that is, the king's valley.

[ 4 : 27 ] And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. Now he was a priest of God Most High. He blessed Abram and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth.

Blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. He gave him then a tenth of all. The king of Sodom, Barah, said to Abram, Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.

Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say that I have made Abram rich.

I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten and the share of the men who went with me, Aner and Eshcol and Mamre.

Anyway, let them take their share. Now you wonder immediately, I hope with me, what in the world is this doing in the Bible? Why do we need to know this story about Abram and this particular battle and what went on here and who in the world is this Melchizedek character and where did he come from?

[ 5 : 47 ] He just kind of pops onto the scene out of nowhere, 14 chapters into this thing. Well, as we think about that, we're going to chase a theme through this chapter together and it's reflected in the title.

It's the theme of separation and it's the temptation that human beings face to get desperate in sin when we are dealing with the issues of life and the challenges of life.

Now think with me, friends. Every single day of your life, you are making decisions and taking actions that in some manner separate you from one thing and bring you closer to another thing. And some of these things are, I admit, very kind of just common to our everyday life. And so it's easy to take them for granted. It's easy not even to think about them in the way that I'm about to say.

Let me give you a couple of examples. You use an umbrella to do what? Think of it this way, to separate you from the rain, right? And to draw close to keeping you dry.

[ 6 : 54 ] So you're trying to keep something away from you. You're trying to keep it at a distance while bringing something else close that's important to you. I know. Well, common.

Think of this. You take a shower, I hope, every day to separate your body from the dirt. And then what do you do? You perfume yourself so that you can make yourself pleasant in being around other people, right?

Right. This is what we do. We don't think about being separate from those kinds of things and drawing near to other things, but every single day, we're doing stuff like that.

And then, of course, of course, on a more serious note, you and I are called by God as Christians to separate ourselves from sin. And we do that by putting off sinful desires of our hearts and actions that follow on those sinful desires.

And so what we're to do is replace our repentance, our turning away from that sin and putting it off, those desires, those attitudinal sins that we hold within our heart or the actions that we do following on those things, we want to replace those with godly actions, godly thoughts.

[ 8 : 11 ] We want to, as born-again people, live to the glory of God. And so we are concerned with pleasing the Lord. That's something that we did not care about before God brought us to faith in Christ.

Is that right? Yeah. I was the same way. I did not think about or care about bringing honor to God in any way in my life. My decisions were my own.

And they were made typically with me trying to figure out what's the best course of action here that will reap for me the best reward or the biggest bang for my buck.

And that was done on different levels in my life. You do that and I do that. What's the difference now that you're a Christian, Jeff? All those decisions are weighed in light of what I know to be the truth and what God has done for me in my life to help me think in terms of God.

How will this most honor and please you so that I stay away from the things that distract me from that goal and I promote myself in the things that will help me do those God-honoring actions and attitudes?

[ 9 : 18 ] You know, Christianity is not rocket science. It really comes down to some very bare-bones decisions that you and I make every single day that deal with separation and bringing to.

Separating from and drawing close to. And you'll see some scriptures in a moment that speak to that very thing. If you can begin to break this thing down and think about it in very straightforward terms like that, when you face the issues of life, you're in a much better position to peel away all of the distractions and deceptions that Satan and your own heart want to throw in there and you can get right to the core of what matters most.

Is this going to help promote me in holiness before God or is it going to draw me away from that? It comes down to that, doesn't it? That's exactly what Abram's facing.

That's why this story is in the Bible. Not because we want to exalt Abram but because we want to exalt the God that helped Abram be faithful in that. And he's still in that business operating today in

your life and in my life.

This is why this becomes so important. You and I, then, hear the way I say this, you and I are called by God to live separate from the world of sin lives.

[10:33] Separate from the world of sin lives. Well, what does that mean? Do we then cloister ourselves away? Do we all need to become monks and go hide somewhere from the world?

No, that's not it at all. As Christians, we live in this world and we live among sinners and unbelievers. We too, fighting sin in our own life, yes, but we are not to live of the world. In other words, we are not to live being defined by the values, priorities of this world. We are called to live a different set of priorities and values.

We are called to treasure a different kind of treasure from what we were treasuring before we came to know Christ. This is the message of separation that we find throughout the Scriptures.

Here's what happens, friends. We tend to get desperate and sinful about our lives when we are not trusting and obeying God from hearts that love and honor Him.

[11:35] When we drift off into our own thing, that's when we start getting into trouble. And so we want to think carefully about that through the life of Abram.

I think we can all agree the world would be a very different place and even a much better place, I think, if we had more of us living separate but not desperate lives.

when you think about what sin is and allow the Bible to define sin in our lives, please consider this with me this morning. Sin, every single time we sin, every time, sin is an act of desperation.

Now you may think, well, it doesn't feel so desperate when I'm impatient with my children and I speak to them in selfish ways that reflect a heart that isn't being considerate of where they are and that becomes sin in my life.

That's not sounding so desperate to me. Well, maybe at different levels we can see this as desperation. Anytime you're acting in sin and away from the Lord, in my view, you're operating in desperate times right now.

[12:45] You're doing something desperate. You're clutching at something, typically itself, but you're clutching and what that reveals to us is I'm not trusting God and I'm not obeying God.

Now what you want to ask is why? What's my issue? Why would I trade the wisdom and holiness and goodness of God for a moment of personal satisfaction that I know is going to take me away from what's best for me and the people that are in my sphere in that moment?

This is no win. Sin is a no win proposition. Now do you see how I'm saying why it's desperate? There's something going on here. Well, God deals with that.

We saw last week in the sermon some things that were going on in Abram's life that God helped him recover from and now we see Abram doing something on the heels of that colossal failure in his life.

We're going to see him do something that is incredible and we need to understand how that has come about. What happened to change Abram? What's going on in his life?

[13:53] In Genesis 14 we see Abram facing a fearsome threat to his life. We just read about it. This is a threat to his family.

This is a threat to his faith. And what do we see? Listen, we see Abram respond to the Lord in the midst of this threat.

And he responds with trust and obedience and that trust and obedience does this for him. And this is where we want to camp out. That trust and obedience in the Lord in the midst of this threat helps Abram come to the place where he guards his heart from fear and pride.

That's the text. Now it can help him guard his heart from lots of other stuff but our text is highlighting that this morning. He is guarding himself from fear and from pride by trusting and obeying God.

Why? Well, we got this huge army that's coming down and it's laying waste to everything and Abram's place in the oaks of Mamre are right in the path of this army as they march through the center of Israel.

[15:02] Right in the path. And so he's tempted to fear the army and fear the results of what could happen to him and his family. These are people who kill the men if they don't enslave them.

They take the women for themselves if they don't kill them. They steal all the kids to raise them up in their ways and then they take everything that you own. Your food, your possessions, they loot everything and they have this giant caravan and walk off with it.

So by guarding his heart and trusting the Lord, he's guarding himself against fearing all of that and forecasting what's going to happen. You see where that could lock him up? Now that could become a thing where it's just about me and mine.

Well, you know, good luck everybody but I'm out of here. I'm heading to the hills kind of thing. And then he guards himself from pride. Abram's going to experience an incredible victory that can only be explained one way and we're going to see that.

He could have taken credit for that. He could have marched back into town saying, I know, I know, I'm the stud. Look at me. Look at what I did. But he didn't do that.

[16:10] We want to understand all of that. This is where we live. Abram is learning to live for the Lord and that means this. Let me show you this up on the screen.

Learning to live for the Lord means that he's living a holy or separate depending on the Lord life. Not a sinful or what I'm calling desperate depending on self life.

He was tempted in that. That's the dilemma that he's in. So what we're saying is that this is a life of trust and Abram's trust isn't in himself.

It isn't in his men and in his little army and in his little thing. He's trusting God and it's based, his trust is based in three expressions of God's goodness.

Now this is very important. Three expressions of God's goodness to him. The first is this. It's Abram's trust in God's promises. Abram's trust in God's promises.

[17:11] Now I want you to notice with me as we move through this, a response of faith in your life in God's promises brings godly perspective and peace.

That's what this is bringing out in Abram's life. When you respond to the Lord in faith in terms of God's promises made to you and he's made plenty of them, it brings godly perspective and peace to your life.

And we're talking about right in the midst of things that might be very challenging to you. Things that are tearing at your heart. Things that are tempting you to be afraid, worried, anxious.

Things that tempt you to control, manipulate, tighten the noose of your life so that you can have some false assurance that you're in control. Which you're not.

You're not. Did I bust your bubble? We are not in control. We want to think we are and we're not. And all it takes is one little aspect of life in your family or something go on and it shows you.

[18:20] Look, a flat tire shows you. I don't have as much control as I thought I did. It's just crazy how that happens. A responsive faith in God's promises brings godly perspective and peace.

So all that is happening in these first 12 verses talking about these kings and all this kind of stuff sets the stage for the point of the story in the second half of the chapter.

That's why all of this information about these kings and where they're from and what they're doing and the different coalitions that are coming together are important as Israel hears this for the first time read by Moses they're listening because they're about to step over the Jordan River and do battle with all of these people in Canaan.

And now they're hearing a story about something God did in the life of their Hebrew ancestor where he got a great victory in this very place where they're about to go in and do battle.

This is extremely relevant. I would have perked up if I'm standing there listening to this wearing my sword realizing that I may go into battle tomorrow and my family I may lose my life and my family won't have me anymore.

[19:33] I'm listening. Anything you can tell me Moses that might help me out with this faith issue I'm listening bro. And that's where they are. That's where we stand.

That's the perspective that we're looking at. Now look we don't need to get into the weeds of all these kings and all that kind of stuff. What we need to understand though is how this war fits into the narrative that we're looking at.

So again just if you scan with me those first 12 verses or so you see that we're being introduced to the different kings and the where they come from and who's getting together with whom and who's allying with whom and who the enemies are.

And then we see that they're going to meet in this valley of Sidin and they're going to go at it. Five kings against four. And we're going to see that Keter-Lammer and the kings from Babylonia win the battle.

And it scatters the kings that were around the area where Abram lived in the area of Sodom and Gomorrah that kind of thing. Now there were three threats which the people of the ancient world

were most terrified by.

[ 20 : 48 ] Three threats. Famine, disease, and invading armies. Now the verdict is out about which one of these would be the one that they probably feared the most.

Alright? Perhaps the threat of an invading army was the worst of the three because the army carried the likelihood that famine and disease would follow in their wake.

And I understand that. I can get my mind around that. But you want to also think of this. There is the potential and there's verses in Proverbs that actually say this. There is the potential if you know this is coming that you can run and hide from the armies, right?

And people did that. And Proverbs actually says when a threat like that's coming you'd be a fool not to go and run and hide. So go run and hide. That's okay. But here's what you can't run from.

You can't run from hunger. You cannot run and hide from hunger because hunger will follow you wherever you go. So you need to find food.

[ 21 : 52 ] So I think they probably feared famine the most. Even though armies would bring famine and disease leave it in their wake. But I don't know.

If we were able to go back and poll them who knows what they'd tell us. This invading army was a northeastern alliance of four powerful kings from in and around what we call modern day Iran and Iraq.

Surprise! They were from Babylonia. Their intention was to punish the five kings of the southernmost city-states who were refusing to pay any further tribute to them after 12 years of being under their thumb.

So according to and this is interesting to me archaeological evidence derived from excavations in and around these former city sites of that era the army of Keterleomer was large.

It was probably numbering in the thousands. Now don't think like later in the scriptures in the Old Testament where you see 180,000 Assyrians. It wasn't that big.

[ 22 : 59 ] Probably several thousand but much bigger than anything that these city-states could field that were around the area of Canaan. And when these kings began their campaign they brutalized everyone in their path.

That's what the text is telling us. They brutalized everyone in their path. The contrast of perspectives is evident right away in the passage.

What do I mean? The king of Sodom is intent on keeping and ruling over the land of Canaan by worldly wisdom and might. Worldly power.

Confidence in his armies. Confidence in his strategic ability to defeat the enemy. That's the king of Sodom. He trusts in the things of man. He trusts in horses and armies and allies and in his own prideful prowess.

They never would have entertained this enterprise against these other kings if they didn't think they could win after 12 years of being under their thumb. But Abram is very different.

[ 24 : 01 ] Abram in the contrast is armed with God's promises. That's it. That's it. He doesn't have an army of thousands. He doesn't have a campaign of military success in his life like these men would.

Right? They just got through laying waste to everybody that stood against them. That's not Abram. Abram's got the promises. Look at chapter 12 with me. Look at chapter 12 of Genesis and look at one of these promises.

This is how it all started out when God called Abram to salvation, to belief, to faith in the God of the Hebrews. Now the Lord said to Abram in verse 1, Go forth from your country, from your relatives, from your father's house to the land which I will show you.

So God's taking him to a place. I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great. And so you shall be a blessing.

Verse 3, And I will bless those who bless you and the ones who curse you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

[ 25 : 13 ] And so Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken. Alright, now look at chapter 13. We did this just last week. If you look down at verse 14, The Lord said to Abram after Lot had separated from him, Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward, southward, eastward, westward, all the land you see, I will, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.

I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth then your descendants can also be numbered.

So, Abram, arise, walk about this land through its length and its breadth for I will give it to you. And Abram moved his tent.

Do you see who stands behind this? I will. I am is the one who will. And so this is what Abram is armed with. He doesn't need to try and control all the moving parts of these promises.

He doesn't need to become desperate in his evaluation and actions about this war or the timing of all these promises. He doesn't need to be sitting around in his tent trying to figure out how to make all this work.

[ 26 : 34 ] That's going to happen in chapter 16 and it's going to be a disaster. But right now, he's proven faithful. faithful. The people groups which this army conquered before they even faced off with the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were no pushovers.

The people that they've already conquered. See, they haven't even gone to war with the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah yet and they're conquering all these different cities and villages and people who are coming out to meet them in war.

I want to show you some of these people and what they were called because I want you to realize that this is a formidable threat. The emim and zuzim were said to be great, many, and very tall or in some translations giants from Deuteronomy chapter 2.

And the rephaim meant strong ones. Zuzim meant powerful ones and emim meant terrible ones. Now, what's the scripture?

See, the Hebrews would have known this. They don't have to have me translate for you up here. When they heard these names, they would have went, ooh, terrible ones. Ooh, powerful ones. Oh, we know them.

[ 27 : 48 ] And they would have realized, you mean, they've already beaten those people?

Mm-hmm. They've already taken them out. Oh my goodness, kind of thing. Or people like them.

So the northeastern kings under Keter-Lammer, they just steamrolled over each one of these clans in their march to the south. And the story is telling us that this is a powerful, powerful force which no one can resist.

You see that? See how that's coming out of the text? Now, it sets the tension for what will become of Abram and how he will survive this terrible threat to God's promises.

God's made these promises. Now, we've got this huge threat coming right into the heart of where Abram lives. Oh no, what's going to happen to Abram? See, every good story has tension, right?

Every good story, you don't know if the hero's going to make it out of there or not. See, what I do is if it has a sequel, I go ahead and I see, oh, there he is. He made it. So now I can relax. I can watch.

[ 28 : 48 ] We don't have a new hero in the next one. That's just what I do. I'm the guy who goes to the end of the book and says, oh, okay, now I can relax. And then I read the rest of the book. Sorry, that's just how it is.

I don't live in suspense. I got enough drama in my life. I don't need to add more. So this is the tension that's being set up. Abram, Abram, for his part, was making good on the lessons the Lord was teaching him in the daily challenges of his life.

Don't skip over that. Will Abram trust God? Will he continue to seek? Will he continue to be faithful and be contented with what God enables him to do?

Or is Abram going to try to run off like he did in Egypt and do his own thing and endanger and peril the people he's responsible for in his life? Man, when we get stubborn and selfish, we can bring a lot of harm to the people around us.

Abram saw the way the Lord handled Pharaoh. For those of you who were here for those last couple sermons, Abram has seen the way the Lord handled Pharaoh, and all the events in Egypt.

[ 29 : 55 ] And so the Bible confirms what Abram learned. Here it is. God guides the affairs of kings and men according to his wisdom and purposes.

Now let me ask you, is he still doing that today? Yes, he is. So do we need to lose sleep over Iran getting a bomb? I don't like that prospect one single bit.

And I'm ready for him to take action. I can tell you that. I really am. And I pray that way. But I don't want to go to bed and lose sleep over all these things that are going on between Elon and Trump and all these other things that threaten this and threaten that.

I mean, you watch the news every day, you would just think that there is no God in the universe holding all this together. together. And that's the problem. There is a God and it is his world and he's going to be doing exactly what he's been doing from the beginning of creating us.

He's going to hold his world together and sustain his world according to his purposes. This isn't a haphazard affair for the Lord, is it? No. God is going to continue to guide the affairs of kings and countries and men, people like Putin, a murderous, murderous, terrible fiend.

[ 31 : 16 ] God's going to use these men in his purposes. Notice some of the scriptures that speak to this. The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord. See that? He turns it wherever he wishes.

Now, that's comforting to me. How about this one? There's no wisdom and understanding and no counsel against the Lord. That's right. There is no country, there is no dictator, there is no power, there is no army that can dictate to God.

The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory belongs to the Lord and that is what Abram knew. The only reason Abram was able to get up 318 men and pursue Keterlamer is because he knew that God, God, had the victory.

Now, even the wicked king of Sodom and his evil coalition that he's pulled together to fight against Keterlamer, served the greater purposes of the Lord in relation to Abram and his life.

In other words, Abram's not looking at this coalition and going, go get them guys! Don't let them get to my donkeys! He's not doing that. He knows he can trust the Lord.

[ 32 : 27 ] Think about this verse. The Lord has made everything, do you see that? Everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.

So, God has purposed what will happen with these armies and God has a greater purpose for what's going to happen with what they're doing. Now, they don't know that, but God does.

And here's something that we need to hold on to. As we learn, I've highlighted the word learn because you're in a process just like I am. As we learn to trust the Lord and respond to Him in faith, we benefit from God's truthful perspective on the issues of our lives just as Abram is now benefiting even as this war rages around him.

Trusting in God's promises is doing all of this work in his heart to keep him focused on what he needs to do. Now, what is it that's helping Abram live separately but not desperately during the crisis?

What is it that's helping him most in keeping his godly perspective? And I'll tell you in a word. Here it is. It's Abram's daily habit of worshiping God.

[ 33 : 47 ] Abram is in the habit of worshiping God, honoring God, bowing to God, being humble and obedient to God. And in that discipline of his life, stuff that comes in, smaller stuff, he's been able to see God work in his life and use these circumstances to God's greater glory and Abram's good.

And so now when this bigger thing comes in, he just continues to do what he's been faithful to do and trust the Lord. The bigger thing is not a bigger thing to God.

You see what I'm saying? It may be a bigger thing to me and to you but it's not to God. Now do you see where the perspective comes? You hold on to that perspective and it'll keep you grounded in the promises of God.

And so now it's not all on you to figure it out and change it and convince and manipulate. It's up to the Lord to do His purposes with a servant who is looking to God and just seeking to be faithful in the moment.

God, I don't have the answers. I have no idea how this is going to turn out. I don't even know where to put my next foot but I know where my foot is now. I'm trusting you. I'm believing you. I'm going to stand on your promises and my prayer is that I won't make any decisions that will distract me from promoting holiness in my life and giving you the glory in all that happens.

[ 35 : 13 ] At the end of the day, Lord, I want everybody to be able to see you working in my life as my God, as my King, as my Lord, as my Savior. And so we need to keep that bigger picture of God's involvement in our heart.

Abram is coming to know and love God more deeply through these experiences. Alright, so now, Abram is trusting God in a second expression of God's goodness to him.

The first one dealt with, I'm going to trust God's promises. Put my faith right there. Now how about this one? Trust in God's protection. Now here's where it gets a little more dicey.

The kings have fought their war. Keter, Lehermer, and the kings of Babylonia have won. All the other armies that they fought against have scattered. Many of them killed.

Now what happens? Verses 13 through 16. Then a fugitive is the way the New American Standard says. All this is is a survivor. A survivor of the battle comes and he tells Abram, the Hebrew, all that

transpired.

[ 36 : 20 ] But he gives him one piece of information that tips the balance of the scales for Abram's actions. Right? Now he was living, Abram was living by the oaks of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner.

And these were allies. So we have some men who've allied with Abram as he's made some friends, etc. When Abram heard from this survivor that his relative, Lot, had been taken captive, his nephew, he led out his trained men born in his house 318 and they went in pursuit as far as Dan. Dan is way up in northern Israel. They're even going to go beyond Dan and they're going to go into what we call Syria today, beyond Lebanon and into Syria today pursuing these guys.

This is an amazing reality. What I want to say to you here is a response of faith in the protection of God brings godly boldness and blessing. If you want to know the secret to living a bold Christian life, you see people that you admire who seem to step out in a bold faith in the Lord.

They don't seem to be as intimidated as you are, as anxious, as worried, and stuff like that. These are people who are responding in faith to God's protection on their life. They're not presuming on God.

[ 37 : 41 ] They're trusting the Lord. They believe that they're not going to die until God says it's time for them to die. Now that doesn't mean that you jump out of airplanes without a parachute. You've got to use your sense.

Did you know I saw a video of a guy do that? He jumped out of a plane skydiving without a parachute on purpose. I stopped it. I didn't even want to see what happened. I don't know if he lived or died but it said he did it.

I've got to go back and see did that guy make it now? I'm worried about him. So we need to use wisdom. We need to use so don't presume on the Lord but look at verse 13 when this guy came and talked to Abram.

Where does the man who had escaped find Abram? That's the question we ought to be asking of verse 13. Where does he find Abram? He finds Abram where God had led him after his failure in Egypt.

He's still there being faithful right where God left him. Right? That's where Abram had built an altar in his repentance to the Lord. This is a special place of worship in Abram's life and Abram is still there contented in the Lord worshiping the Lord and watching the Lord grow his family and bless his business.

[ 38 : 53 ] Abram's just living his contented faithful everyday life. No big deal. And now this guy walks in and brings all this drama. Right? Isn't that the way it happens?

You just had your quiet time and everything's at peace and you're driving on and then all of a sudden you get to work you get to wherever you are and drama blows up in your face. That's life. Here's the point. The point is that Abram is being faithful in his walk with God. He's living in the contentment of what God is providing.

He's living on God's timetable within the means of God's provision which is why Stuart this is why we get in trouble. When we get outside of this contentment and this trust and this obedience and we start telling ourselves we deserve more.

We should this. We should that. We ought to this. We ought to that. And the next thing you know we're moving out in that direction and we're acting selfishly. Let me tell you there's an expression out there that says don't get ahead of God.

[ 39 : 54 ] Well let me just tell you you cannot do that. I know what we mean by that but that's impossible. How do you get ahead of the God of the universe? Can you see the future like he can? Do you live in a timelessness like he does?

No. Are you sovereign like he is? Absolutely not. There is no way for you to get ahead of God so don't worry about that. Oh what if I make a decision and I get out ahead of God? What?

Are you kidding? You can't do that. So don't worry about that one. If you're going to worry about something I'll give you something in a minute and then I'll tell you how to repent of it. Alright?

Because worry is sin.

So don't go there. Abram is a peaceful guy. He's learned to live separately that is wholly from the pagan carnal ways of those around him and yet he's surrounded by unbelievers.

Look these guys that have allied with him there's no mention here that these men believe in the Lord. These are men who lived in the land of Canaan. Right? So Abram is living among the people

but he's not of the people.

[ 40 : 58 ] He's not adopting their ways. He's being a light. He doesn't live desperately as if God had made no promises to care for him protect him provide for him.

And then verse 14 comes. Abram heard that that happened and he takes these trained men born in his look at the details here born in his house 318 wow 318 against thousands wow and he goes in pursuit as far as Dan.

You know Abram's the guy of action. I like Abram. I don't see Abram hearing this and then running out in a panic and hollering at everybody get the donkeys get the camels get the guns make sure you get extra ammo blah blah blah he's not going crazy.

I think Abram went out and he told everybody here's the plan this is what we're going to do he probably had several guys that he knew he could trust to help him manage all of his stuff obviously he had a big enterprise going on and I think he started giving those commands to those different people he probably went in and kissed his wife and said you know pray for me I hope to be back we'll see what God does but he's resolute isn't he he is resolute now what what do we what do we draw from this listen listen this is a calculated bold action on Abram's part now I'm not making light of that at all giving God the glory doesn't make any light of the fact that Abram is responding with great courage he's responding hear me men he's responding within his ability to right a wrong and overcome evil with good that's what godly men do godly men take action where action is required to overcome evil with good that's what godly men do and Abram is stepping up to the plate here I'm very proud of him he's not trying to play the hero he's not trying to control or manipulate everything no no and so here's what we have we have the bigger story and reality of god's sovereignty at work so god is at work here to fulfill his promises i made a promise to this man i told him i'd take care of him i told him i'd provide for him and i told him his descendants would be more numerous than the sands of the ocean god's going to keep his promise and keter lammer isn't going to ruin it all right you with me on that but we also have this lesser lesser but necessary story of abram's life and responses to god's sovereignty which are at work within the greater story and that's you and me that's where we derive the benefit we say to each other i derive the benefit of knowing that my little my little sphere in life comes under the purposes and designs of god just like abram's you know i i may not be rushing out into battle but i got i got my stuff every day and i'll either be faithful and content or i won't right and so that's what we want to take away from this these human responses both the good responses and the evil ones serve the greater purposes of god so keter lammer and all these guys that had come down from the north king the king barra of sodom and all his wicked wicked brothers in arms they are not thwarting the purposes of god quite the opposite they're being used by god in a very special way in the life of abram does abram see all of those details in the moment no he does not what does he have in front of him all i know to do is i've got to act in faithfulness and entrust i've got to believe god and go make a wrong right because it's within my power to do it not because i'm a hero not because i'm special but because i have the responsibility of being able to go out and right a wrong and it would be sin for me to sit back and not do that now that doesn't mean you insert yourself into these contexts in situ i can't i can't do all that right now see this is counseling 101 right here but i can't go through all the contingencies of these different things that you might get in the way of drama in your life this is this isn't you trying to um what will we say butt in insert yourself where you're not wanted that's not what this is don't do that because then when people respond to you with who do you think you are you kind of deserve that right we're not supposed to be busy bodies if they don't want you involved pray from a distance pray from a distance do do war from a distance but i'm sure that if you were to go and ask lot hey lot would you like for your uncle to show up and kind of get you out of this mess oh yeah i would actually is he on his way do you know something i don't know so he's working on it behind the scenes he's trying to be faithful both both of these armies that are battling it out are evil so there's not a good army and a bad army they're both bad even so they're servants of god's designs keter laemer obviously he's the victor he has a battle-hardened army of thousands and they have proven unstoppable they've basically sacked canaan and carried off everybody that's that's amazing to me now what happens in verses 15 and 16 then all this has been moving toward these verses makes little sense if we don't see it through the eyes of faith all right look at verse 15 and 16 and ask the only way we can explain what we're about to read is through the eyes of faith abram

[ 46 : 59 ] divided his forces now we got some warriors in our in our midst and i bet you they will tell you that dividing your forces isn't always the best option for you all right i even know that am i right

is that right all right never mind there i can't use them there's yes all right never mind normally you wouldn't divide your forces and come but he does and you saw this in gideon too didn't you gideon did this same thing and so abram's dividing his forces it's a nighttime operation here so he and his servants do this separation they attack and look they defeat them they defeat these battle hardened thousands and then if that's not enough they pursue them as far as hoba which is north of damascus they're going way up beyond northern israel through lebanon into modern day syria to pursue these guys and they're hacking them as they go and chasing them out of dodge wow they are intent on this thing and then verse 15 after 15 he brought back all the good 16 and all the relatives of lot all lot's possessions the women the wives the sisters the daughters all the defenseless he gathers them up and he brings them back so we you know how did an army of hundreds who had likely never fought on this scale before defeat an experienced army of thousands who to this moment were undefeated and still riding on the wave of all their victories look their morale was super high so it's like abram you walked into a hornet's nest that on every human level should have seen you get defeated but you didn't you won an incredible victory now what are we supposed to say well it was all that strategy at night and that dividing of his forces you know that was pretty clever and but God amen thank you Dora and this is what Israel is meant to see in this narrative about their ancestor but more importantly about their God right but

God God keeps his promises he delivers his people I say it over and over Jeff this is what this passage is about absolutely absolutely this is where the original readers were drawn deeper into the point of the plot they were shown the heart of the story God reveals it in the contrast between King Sodom or Barah and the King Melchizedek so first the matter of the King of Salem this is where we get into the third and last one this is a response of faith in the provision of God and that brings a devotion and discernment to Abram's life I'm trusting in God's promises I'm trusting in God's protection I'm trusting in God's provision and in doing that a perspective comes to my life that helps me to follow faithfully in the Lord because I'm not making it about me and I'm not putting my eyes on the problem I'm putting my eyes on the Savior as I work the problem I trust

God I don't even trust me maybe I'm not smart enough to figure this out and I need I need God in the Holy Spirit to do something I can't do for myself God does stuff like that it's wonderful now this devotion of Abram in 17 through 24 this devotion loyalty dedication affection for God they're all evidenced in their lives as Melchizedek and Abram joined to do two things which characterize the lives of everybody who truly loves God I have seen it in this congregation this morning the first thing they do is they exalt God together they worship together the second thing they do is they edify each other they bring each other up in their common bond of fellowship with the Lord two things they worship God together and they build each other up as they do that together that's what's happening here that's why it's important for you to come this is why it's important for you to be here you being here allows you to worship the Lord with your brothers and sisters and build them up in the faith your presence here alone is that just by you being here right and this is this is what they're sharing in look at it with me then after his return from the defeat of Keter

Laamer and the kings who were with him in verse 17 the king of Sodom went out to meet Abram in the valley of Sheba that is the king's valley but then we have this and Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine now he was a priest of God most high that's a very important title he blessed Abram and said blessed be Abram of God most high possessor of heaven and earth and blessed be God most high who's delivered your enemies into your hand and then Abram responds and gives a tenth of all he had to Melchizedek so these men are worshiping and honoring God and Melchizedek starts the process he runs out to meet Abram and gets all of this thing started so let me put this up here for you to see in their world of wickedness waste and war here are two men who worship El Elyon that is the most high

God or God most high they're honoring God's sovereignty God's loving control over his world and their lives so Melchizedek offers blessings on both Abram and God as he and Abram honor God's salvation Melchizedek runs out and recognizes the only reason that I see you here and breathing is because God showed up and gave you a great victory bro and Abram's all about that he's like yes absolutely here come here give me a hug this is God doing a great thing and we're going to worship and that's what they do right there in front of everybody these two men start worshiping the Lord God delivered Abram from his enemies just as God promised he would do God provided the victory and Melchizedek he's very keen to recognize and honor the Lord in that victory now this is the point of the passage here it is under great human odds and in the greater unlikeliness of any possible

victory

[ 53 : 34 ] God's faithfulness and power overcome those odds to God's greater glory and Abram's good that is your God in action take great great comfort and be encouraged brothers and sisters Israel needs this message to be burned into their very souls don't they they need to see God this way now Melchizedek for his part he's a godly man whom Abram recognizes as the king of Salem as a godly priest of the Lord now Salem would become Jerusalem so that's what we're talking about he came out of Jerusalem what we would know then Melchizedek and Abram they're yoked!

in their hearts and spirits because they have a shared devotion in the Lord or God most high and they recognize him as the possessor of heaven and earth in other words nothing's going to happen on God's world that God doesn't design and purpose for and they live under that that's more than just something they say they live it so it's more than a human victory over a human aggressor Melchizedek's offering of bread and wine that's to refresh and honor Abram but it's also an act of kindness and even more these items are symbols of a common faith and worship of a common God bread and wine are communion elements right that's what we know them as that's what Jesus would use them as and so Melchizedek comes out and all of this symbolism is to let us know and let the Hebrews know these two men are worshiping God they are thanking God for a great victory against all odds now

Abram understands that Melchizedek is honoring the Lord as Abram's faithful protector and Abram responds generously to this worship of God most high what does he do he gives a tenth of everything he's brought back to Melchizedek Melchizedek gets all of that see this is why the Bible teaches that we're to give out of hearts overflowing with gratitude for God we're not to give grudgingly this isn't about a tenth it's not about the amount it's about the heart overflowing with gratitude I think Abram would have been fine if he gave him all of it he didn't keep anything for himself doesn't let he said he he said he said nope I ain't keeping nothing right it's all going to Melchizedek it's going to the men who served with me as reward for their loyalty and faithfulness and putting their lives on the line doing what I told them to do other than that

King Sodom you take the rest we're going to see why he does that we ask a question what what is what is happening here that the scene is now set for what is a degrading contrast to this act of honoring the Lord here we got these two guys worshiping but something else is going to happen that's very degrading to that reality Melchizedek's godliness then sets the tone for what Abram does next Melchizedek's actions set the tone for what Abram does next and noticeably aloof from all the celebration and worship of God's goodness is the king of Sodom right he's out of the scene he's not part of all this worship with Melchizedek and Abram he's standing off on the sidelines now verse 17 tells us that he's there with Melchizedek and Abram off to the side that he's greeted

Abram but he's removed himself from worshiping God he was out there for the initial entourage don't you see politicians do that they just show up and they're all out front with the pictures and everything but then turn the heat up and they sorry what it is but verse 17 tells us what's really going on what does it tell us oh after his return from the defeat the kings that were with him the king of Sodom and goes out to meet him in the valley Melchizedek king of Salem comes out with bread and wine well okay fine where's Sodom where's the king these guys are worshiping the next time we have anything to do with Barah king of Sodom is down in 21 right after Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything you probably know that the king of Sodom saw all that happen his eyes probably got that big and what does he do the king of Sodom said to

[ 58 : 20 ] Abram hey give the people to me and take the goods for yourself now that may on the front of it sound pretty good but that's that's not what's going on here all of this comes in the form of a tiny preposition to understand what's happening a tiny little preposition intended to convey the idea of ownership or possession and it's the preposition of we don't want to miss this of look I'll put it up here on the screen for you Melchizedek is said to be a priest of God most high Abram is Abram of God most high that's in my translation the king is the king of Sodom what being the king of Sodom means is defined for us in chapter 13 verse 13 now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord so what does the king of Sodom stand for everything that's wicked and against the Lord that's what we see he is of

Sodom Abram is of God most high Melchizedek is of God most high this is dramatic difference Abram's love for God brings the fruit and blessing of godly discernment to this moment notice verse 21 the king of Sodom said give to the people give the people to me and take the goods for yourself now notice the order here folks look see that at the bottom of the screen give to me and then take

for yourself that order is important give me and then you do whatever you want but make sure I get mine that's where we're going to start it reveals a lot the king of Sodom offers Abram a lot of spoils from the victory it's the kind of stuff that kings and armies have battled over for millennia but Abram has this deft answer to the king of Sodom in 22 and 23 Abram said to the king of Sodom look I've sworn I have sworn to the Lord God most high possessor of heaven and earth that I will not take a thread a thread folks or a sandal thong or anything that is yours for fear you would say I have made Abram rich see he sees right into this huckster king this fake king and he answers him now several issues of godly discernment serve to prevent and protect Abram from unwisely accepting this material treasure and prestige other men might have said yeah lavish it on me man you know I'm a hero I know it no not Abram look at this look at what he does here number one Abram is guarding his heart against pride to protect his relationship with God I'm not going to give in to pride here I'm not going to make this about me in other words number two Abram refuses the king's offer because he recognizes that to accept it would diminish

God's role in Abram's victory and so what's the lesson there I don't want to do anything in my life role of God in being my God and Savior I don't want people to see so much me I want them to see the God I serve the Jesus who saved me so who do we want to put forward in these issues of our life me or Jesus well obviously we want to put Jesus forward as a dad we want to put Jesus forward as a mom a grand mom!

we want to put Jesus forward as an employee a boss whatever our role might be then number three Abram is unwilling to yoke himself to anything or anyone which would act to draw him away from the Lord or work to diminish Abram's dependence on God for all that he needs in life you see those are that's how you make your decisions is this going to exalt God in my life is this going to promote holiness in my life is this going to pose any threat to me being pulled away or distracted from promoting myself in holiness to the Lord exalting the Lord the Lord being seen in my life in this way you see what he's doing here he doesn't want to diminish his dependence on God I'm not going to it can go away in a heartbeat and then finally Abram's wise discernment keeps him focused on the truth that

[ 63 : 00 ] God will provide for Abram's every need isn't that the point God provides for every need now folks this dependence on God allows Abram to be free from the power of deception of riches to entice him away from trusting!

God to care for him we're all tempted in this way so Israel you don't need the nations to do for you what only God can do man you just wish they had learned that because time and again they're going to turn to the nations and the pagans all around them and it's going to be disaster Christians we need to heed the same message don't look to the world to give you what only God can provide wisdom faith discernment love as Christians we're commanded to exercise discernment in order to avoid allowing ourselves to be yoked with any person or group of people or endeavor which will draw us away from faithfulness to God look if it's going to draw you away from faithfulness to God you don't need to go there whoever it is whatever it is compromise of any kind is our enemy and so we have this in the

New Testament examine everything do you see that carefully hold fast to that which is good abstain from every form of evil I promised I'd show you that earlier in my message there it is let love be without hypocrisy learn to abhor what is evil cling to what is good friends sin is not your friend here's another way of saying that we have to set our hearts to walk closely!

with God in day to day life as we seek to develop our spiritual ability to discriminate discrimination in spiritual terms is a good thing because discrimination helps us separate and not get desperate what do I mean by that we learn to discriminate in terms of what God says is right or truth from that which God says is wrong error and we learn to apply it and live by that wisdom now let me put this up here as I move to a close we live by this unseen line of faith at work and how we trust and obey Jesus now I want to explain that to you real quickly as we seek to walk in a manner worthy of our calling in the Lord that unseen line is defined by trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord Jeff what are you talking about we don't live by sight we live by faith we live by faith we're not putting our focus on trying to work all the problem in our ways and do everything we think we should do according to what we think is best we're living by faith and applying that faith in what we do in other words we're coming to the issues and the greatest issue that is involved in me facing the challenges of life isn't just solving the problem it's not just getting out of the pressure it's not just relieving the pain the burden no that's not the main focus what's the main focus for a

Christian the main focus for a Christian is how do I please the Lord Jesus in the way that I live through this issue that's it you go there and God will guide you God will give you wisdom through the issue so the issue then doesn't become the focus the focus is your Lord and Savior through the issue this is where your Christian feet meet the road man and sometimes that asphalt is hot and you need to learn how to keep your focus so there's an unseen line there in other words our faith becomes visible in our efforts to please the Lord did you hear me when does our faith become visible then Jeff because I can't cut Ben open and see his faith I can't see it but faith becomes visible in our efforts to please the Lord that's why James said show me your faith by the works that you live show me the faith

[ 67 : 16 ] I know it's there it will come out as we seek to please God now look what are you facing in your life right now that you're afraid of or you're tempted to be fearful about anxious about uncertain about what is it what is it you're facing right now it could be big it could be small it could be smaller than something in the past that was much bigger but what is it you're tempted to pride and fear the most important thing for you in the way of the element of this story is for you to make pleasing the Lord Jesus the focus as you move through that issue and trust God's God's not done with Abram he's got some more really serious challenges coming and bless his heart he's not going to do so good in a couple of them and you know the Middle East is what it is today because Abram decided to zig when he should have zagged and he knew better he knew better all right what am

I doing with all this many many things in life shine and sparkle with an alluring promise of something better but to the God trained and discerning eye they are seen for what they truly are a deception a trap a lie don't fall for it make it about pleasing the Lord Jesus that's what Abram is learning here's what I'll end with today this is from Proverbs chapter 3 trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean standing in all your ways acknowledge him that's what I just got through illustrating for you and he will make your path straight see it's not up to you to make them straight he'll do it do not be wise in your own eyes fear the Lord and turn away from evil that's a package deal it will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones can you put that we can look to

Abram in this example and we can take some good encouragement from him let's pray together father you have been faithful as we have looked into your word to open our eyes and to help us understand in practical ways ways that we can live this week making the issues of our life issues of pleasing Jesus and not being manipulative or controlling or worried or anxious or fearful or prideful and so father please help my brothers and sisters take to heart these matters that we see in these old stories that happened so long ago in the lives of real people as you worked in their hearts help us to be these people living faithfully to you I pray that you would help them with their sense of being burdened!  
pray that we