



The Sermon

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Genesis 14:1-24

"Hostile Kings & Just War"

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TRANSCRIPT

Well, I want you to take your Bible and turn with me to the book of Genesis, Genesis chapter 14. The title the message today is "Hostile Kings and Just War. Hostile Kings and Just War." And it's our practice to always read the passage that we're going to be studying. This chapter is so cumbersome, with so many names and cities and regions and places, I'm going to do something a little bit different this morning, and I want you to have your Bible open in front of you. I'm going to just walk us through this chapter. I'm going to give you an overview of this chapter rather than becoming tied down with all of the different names and places.

But it's a chapter about the kings of the north, where Babylon was, where Mesopotamia was. They came down to the south into Canaan, the Promised Land; and verse 1, we see a confederation of these four kings. And they were ruthless, and they were filled with greed, and they wanted the possessions of those who were down around the Dead Sea area especially.

So verse 1 tells us how they formed this coalition. And in verse 2, they came down and made war with the five leading kings in the area of the Dead Sea, and as they did, they dominated them for twelve years - you see that in verse 4. And as they dominated them, they forced the - and these are really like city-states - forced them to pay tribute to the kings to the north, large amounts of possessions. There's really no money at that time to be exchanged but silver and gold and livestock. And the nations, the city-

states down in the south around the Dead Sea area, finally had enough, and they put up resistance – and that is what we see in verse 4. They rebelled and they refused to pay any more tribute.

Well, that did not sit well with the kings to the north, so they decided that they would marshal their troops and their soldiers and combine them, and they would invade the Holy Land, and they would invade the land, what we call Transjordan, which is just to the east of the Jordan River that connects the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. And as they came down, they just went through city-state by city-state by city-state, until they came all the way to the south. They looped back around again to come back to, really, the hub, which was where Sodom and Gomorrah was.

Well, these five kings decided, "We can't give in," and so they mounted a defense. And we read about that defense in verse 8: "They arrayed with battle against these invading kings." And verse 10 tells us that they couldn't mount a defense against these kings from the north, and so they were put in – they were routed. They had to flee for their life. And it tells us that there were a lot of tar pits. And some of those who ran fell into the tar pits. That word for "fell" could be translated "hid," and they could have hid as though like in caves. And others fled to the hill country we see that in verse 10.

And verse 11, "They took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply; but what made it even worse, verse 12, they took Lot, they abducted him, and they took him hostage and gathered up all of Lot's belongings. Remember, Lot was very, very rich. And they then made their way back towards the north.

Well, verse 13 tells us that there was a fugitive, someone who escaped all of this, came straight to Abram. And Abram is living on the other side of the Dead Sea, he's living on the west side of the Dead Sea, and as soon as he hears that his nephew has been taken captive, Abram had 318 men who worked for him, and he had trained each and every one of them in war and in battle. And Abram was a decisive man of action, and as soon as he heard that his nephew had been kidnapped and his possessions stolen by these four

kings that have just gone through the entire region taking anything and everything that they want, Abram is fearless, and Abram goes after them in hot pursuit, which is 318 men, and he goes all the way to the north. And if you were to open your Bible map in the back of your Bible – don't do it now – you would see the very far north, north of the Sea of Galilee is a little town called Dan; and that's about as high up as our maps go.

And he chased them there, and he caught up with them in the middle of the night, and he divided his men up and launched a surprise attack against these four kings, and they just literally devastated the four kings and all of his troops that were significantly larger than what Abram had, and he sent them running. And Abram took off after them, and chased them even further north – so far north it's not even on our Bible maps – until he got back Lot, and he got back the possessions that they had taken from Sodom and Gomorrah, and the possessions that they had taken from Lot who was living in Sodom, and he returns with all these possessions as a victorious conquering general.

There is no way he could have won that victory except that God was with him, and God fought the battle for him, and the battle belongs to the Lord. And as he comes back, he was greeted by the king of Sodom, who did not follow in battle, and was greeted by a man named Melchizedek, who will be mentioned later in the book of Hebrews. And Melchizedek praised Abram for his bold action, and gave glory to God, realizing there is no way he could have won that victory except that the Lord was with him.

And so there was offered by the king of Sodom to Abram all the possessions. The king of Sodom said, "I'll take the people, you take the possessions; we'll split it up." And Abram is a man of principle, and he refuses because he does not want anyone to think he's become rich at the hands of those who live in Sodom. And so he takes only enough food to feed his own 318 men; and that walks us through this chapter.

It's an amazing chapter that suddenly dropped into this unfolding narrative of Genesis. It's often called the war of the kings; and that's what this chapter is, it's the war of the kings. So, let's go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Our Father, thank You for including this chapter in Your inspired record, and we know that it is profitable for us, and that it is here for our good and for our edification. It's one more link in the chain of this unfolding story of Abram. And we see how decisive he was, and how fearless he was, and what a man of courage and commitment and action that he was. And I pray that as we look into this passage that we would become like that which we see, that we would emulate Abram, even as we study him today, and that we would become bold and courageous in the days in which we live. And so, Father, we ask now for Your assistance, that we might be careful students of Your Word, in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

In these verses we see the first war recorded in the Bible. It will certainly not be the last war recorded in the Bible; and the Bible is full of many wars. Moses was a man of war. Joshua was a man of war. David was a man of war, so much so that God would not allow him to build the temple, and that it would go to Solomon. And Jesus said that it would be like this to the end of the age, that at the consummation of human history it will be a time that will be identified as a time of wars and rumors of wars. So they're not going away.

And when Jesus Christ returns, He will return as a conquering warrior, with His garments dipped in blood, the blood of His enemies; and He will come and fight the battle of Armageddon, and He will utterly defeat, and destroy, and then damn all of the enemies of God in that day. In Isaiah 63, He's represented as the messianic warrior who has come back to make war with His enemies.

In this passage we see two wars. One is an evil war, the other is a just war. We see a war that is wrong at the beginning of the chapter, we see a war that is right at the end of the chapter. An evil war is motivated by greed, and arrogance, and pomposity, and the lust for power, and the desire to

dominate the weaker. A just war, on the other hand, is motivated by the desire to protect innocent life, to protect human life that is now exposed to life-threatening danger; and a just war is also motivated to restore what has been unlawfully taken. An evil war is started by an aggressor who takes what does not belong to him. A just war goes after the aggressor and takes back what he has stolen.

And so in this chapter, we have an evil war, and we have a just war. Not all war is wrong. Some war is necessary in order to bring about justice and righteousness on the earth. And so let us look at Genesis 14, and we see the evil war of the four kings to the north of the Mesopotamian area; they are the aggressors. And then we will see the just war of Abram, who protects the life of Lot, and restores his pillaged possessions, as well as the possessions of even Sodom. The first war is to be abhorred, the second war is to be applauded. The Bible does not teach passivism, that you never respond. The Bible teaches the right of self-defense. The Bible teaches the necessity of protecting those who cannot protect themselves.

So, let's walk through this this chapter; and it's a very interesting chapter. And as you know, I have several headings to set in front of you, and I want you to note, first, "the invasion," that's in the first seven verses, "the invasion." This chapter begins with the evil aggressors from the north, from the Mesopotamian area, coming down into the south in order to pillage and to kill.

We read in verse 1, "And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar," - Shinar is north northeast of the Promised Land up in the region of Babylonia, up in Mesopotamia, up in the Euphrates River area. That was the first king. The second king - "Arioch king of Ellasar," - which is probably in the northern part of Mesopotamia. And now the key man, the third name is really the king of the kings, he is the leader of the leaders - "Chedorlaomer, he's the king of Elam," - and he's the dominant force - "and Tidal king of Goiim," - we don't really know where Goiim is exactly, but it's up there to the north. They have come together in a show of force, they have locked arms together, and in verse 2, we read - "that they made war."

They are evil aggressors. They have come down to invade, they have come down to dominate, they have come down to steal and to take what does not belong to them, and they come against the five leading kings from the south, who have to band together to try to put up some kind of resistance on "Bera king of Sodom," - that's just to the east of the Dead Sea, if you can picture where the Dead Sea is - "and Birsha king of Gomorrah," - that's very next to it, east of the Dead Sea - "and Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (which is, Zoar)." That's the southern edge of the valley of Jericho. So it's down in the southern east part of what we would think of as that area in the Middle East.

Verse 3, "All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea)." The Salt Sea is the Dead Sea. To this day you can just float in the Dead Sea because there's so much salt content there. And this valley of Siddim is south and east of the southern tip of the Dead Sea. The Jordan River is flowing into the Dead Sea out of up in the north near the Sea of Galilee.

So, verse 4 says, "Twelve years they had served these kings." So for twelve long years they have been subdued, they have been subjected, they have been forced to pay tribute, they have been forced to pay vast amounts of money to these kings to the north. But the thirteenth year, they rebelled. They finally had had enough and, "We're not going to pay anymore," And so they threw off the yoke of oppression and gained independence.

In verse 5, "In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came" - they descended in hordes, angry and furious, and ready to make war, and ready to shed blood - "and defeated the Rephaim" - which is another Jordan city-state. And so, in addition to these five city-states, there are many other city-states that band together to try to mount some defense, and they are - "in Ashteroth-karnaim and the Zuzim in Ham" - you can see why I didn't read the entire chapter - "and the Emim" - et cetera, et cetera, and et cetera. And all you and I need to know is they just kept working their way down until they had covered the entire area where

Abram has now come into the Promised Land, but specifically on the other side of the Dead Sea.

And it says in verse 7, "Then they turned back" - so once they worked their way all the way down as far south as you could possibly go without going into the gulf, they then looped back to come back to where Sodom and Gomorrah is - "and they conquered all of the country of the Amalekites," - which is south of the Dead Sea - "and also the Amorites, who live there as well." And what should strike us is the geographical accuracy of the Bible.

There are many reasons why we believe the Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and one of these is even the geographical precision with which the Bible is written, at a time when there are not sophisticated maps, at a time in which obviously there's not a GPS or satellite cameras, that as Moses writes this, Moses writes this with exact precision in the order in which these city-states would be found. And one reason that Moses knows each of these city-states so well is that it is the exact route that he took in reverse when he led the children of God from Mount Sinai to Palestine. He's very familiar with his route. It's known as the King's Highway, and it is the main travel route for caravans in this region. And so Moses records this with absolute precision and accuracy, as we would expect, as he is superintended by the Holy Spirit to record without error all that God desires to have recorded.

This leads, second, to "the confrontation" in verse 8. The five kings of the Jordan valley would not allow this evil aggressor to continue to progress. They realize, "We've been pushed into a corner; we're going to have to dig our heels in." And so, in verse 8, "The king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah" - and that's in the area that we call Transjordan, which, again, is to the east of the Jordan River, really east of the Dead Sea - "and the king of Admah" - which is the southeast corner of the Dead Sea - "and the king of Zeboiim" - which is further south - "and the king of Bela," - which is right next to the southeast corner of the Dead Sea - "they came out," - you read that in verse 8: they came out to fight, they came out to defend their families and their possessions that they have worked hard -

"and they arrayed for battle" - meaning they had their instruments of war, they had whatever they would have had (swords and helmets and chest protectors) - "arrayed for battle against them" - the four kings - "in the valley of Siddim."

And verse 9 now lists these four kings from the north. And the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits, which were just very large bogs, that once you stepped in you would not be stepping out except you knew where places were to be able to stand and to walk in little paths and rocks. And they soon realized, in verse 10, that they could not resist these kings coming down from the north, and it says, "They fled." They realized that "we'll be slaughtered here." And so as they turn and fled, it says, "They fell into them," into the tar pits. And probably should be translated "tried to hide themselves in the tar pits." "And those who survived fled to the hill country." Well, that just was a bird's nest on the ground for these four kings from the north.

And verse 11 tells us, "They took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah" - they looted those two cities, they plundered them, and pillaged their possessions - "and all the food supply, and departed." And they're ready to head back now. And verse 12 adds this important footnote - or not footnote, this important addition. Verse 12: "They" - the four kings - "also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom." And so they have now captured an abducted Lot and all of his possessions. Now remind us from last week how rich Lot was. He had massive amounts of livestock, of sheep and goats and camels and silver and gold; and they have literally ransacked Lot's fortune. And on top of that, have carted him off.

So that leads now to "the retribution" in verse 13. There will be now a response by Abram. He's not passive, and he's not a pacifist. He's a man of a just war; he's a man of action. And so, we read in verse 13, "Then a fugitive came" - that would be one who would escape being captured - "and told Abram the Hebrew." Interesting. It's first time in the Bible the word "Hebrew" is used, as Abram is now identified with this nation that is to become Israel.

"Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre" – that would be immediately on the other side of the Dead Sea from Sodom and Gomorrah, it's on the west side; that's where Abram was – "and the brother of Eshcol and the brother of Aner, and these were allies of Abram." Probably what's taken place here is Abram, who has large flocks and needs grazing land, needs water, has worked out an arrangement with Mamre and his two brothers to "allow me to coexist with you here." And there would have been some kind of an exchange that took place such that they were able to coexist and really serve as allies: "We will come to one another's defense."

And so, in verse 14, "When Abram heard that his relative" – meaning Lot – "had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen men." So Abram is so wealthy, wealthy beyond, really, our imagination for that day and time, that he had a staff of three hundred and eighteen men, who served alongside of him caring for his flocks, and guarding his silver and his gold.

And Abram was a very wise and shrewd man, and he knew of the evil in the hearts of men, that he must train these men in war, in battle, because, "One day someone is going to come and try to take what belongs to me, and I need a small army who will be able to fight, and if need be, even kill, if you try to take what belongs to me." So that's Abram; he is a man of action, he's a man who has trained his men in military tactics, and how to fight in war, and how to win. And he says, "He went in pursuit," – in verse 14. He went in pursuit to track them down.

There was an immediate response by Abram. He knew that this called for action on his part, that his nephew, his brother's son, has been taken captive, and this is not right, and they're going to take him all the way back to Babylon and will never see him again; and who knows what atrocities they will commit against him. And they have taken the vastness of his wealth, no doubt, some of it, perhaps, that had been handed down from his own brother Haran. And so Abram was rightly motivated to do what was right in this situation, to step in and to protect an innocent life, and to step in and to retrieve that which has been taken wrongly.

"And so he goes in pursuit to track them down" - and we read - "as far as Dan." Now that's 140 miles to the north. So this was quite the pursuit that Abram now undertakes, but it is a pursuit that he must take, because he's a man of principle, and he's a man of honor, and he is a man who has a conscience, and he is a man who must do what is right in this situation. And again, there is taught in the Bible the doctrine of the just war, that the Bible allows us to exercise self-defense, the Bible allows us to protect our families if harm should be brought against them, and the Bible allows a group that would be the equivalent of a nation to declare war against those that are slaughtering and taking innocent life for the good of humanity. And Abram, in that spirit, steps out in hot pursuit; he doesn't just roll over and play dead.

And so, in verse 15, "He" - Abram, brilliant strategist, by the way - "divided his forces against them," - the four kings who were holding Lot captive - "he divided them by night," - so he could launch a surprise attack in the middle of the night, so that he could surround the four kings and their troops and come at them probably while they're asleep, and to attack them, and to do great harm to them, in order to free those who have been taken captive.

And we read, "He" - referring to Abram - "and his servants" - the 318 trained men - "defeated them." This word "defeat" in the Hebrew language is a very strong word, and it means to smite them, to strike them down, to come down hard on them; and they conquered them, against all odds really. What the five kings to the south could not do, what the five kings to the south with all of the other little small city-states together could not do, when the five kings had to turn and run and hide in tar pits, Abram was able with 318 men to go right into the fray and to attack them, and to devastate them. And we read in verse 15, they were so devastated that "they pursued them as far as Hobah."

Now Hobah is another hundred miles north. That's so far north it's not on any Bible map at the end of a Bible. And Abram will not let them get away; he wants justice to be served, he wants righteousness to be served. And this

is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, that the punishment should fit the crime, "And you have brought unnecessary harm against innocent people, and you have stolen what belonged to them; you shall now turn that back over to us." And so, "He pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus." Yeah, that Damascus where Saul of Tarsus was headed on the road to Damascus when he was struck by the glory of God and was converted to faith in Christ.

Now at this point, let me say this: there is no explanation for Abram's defeating these four powerful kings with their invading hordes, except God, except God was with him, and the battle belonged to the Lord. And I want to give you a couple of verses at this point that will help substantiate this very point. In Psalm 33, verses 16 and 17, I want you to listen to these verses: "The king is not saved by a mighty army; a warrior is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a false hope for victory; nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength." What that is saying - it is not saying that it is wrong to have military weapons, but that it's wrong to trust in military weapons, that your trust must be in the Lord, who will work through means.

And then Proverbs 21, verse 31, makes it abundantly clear. It says, "The horse is prepared for the day of battle." That is commended. That is to be commended, that the horse is to be prepared for battle, that there is military equipment that needs to be prepared on the front end for the day of war. But listen to the second half of this verse, Proverbs 21, verse 31: "But victory belongs to the Lord." So it's not who has the most horses or the most chariots, it is, as John Knox once said, "God plus one still makes the majority"; that if God is on your side, and if you are on God's side, and it is within the will of God, there are not enough forces anywhere to withstand the sovereign will and purposes of Almighty God.

And I think of David when he went to confront Goliath, and in 1 Samuel 17 and verse 47, David, little David, teenage David, said to this massive colossus Goliath, "The battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands." And I love the account in 2 Chronicles 20, when Jehoshaphat was besieged by armies surrounding the city, and God told Jehoshaphat, "Put the Levites on the wall, put the choir up on the walls around the city, and tell

them to sing praises to Me, and see what happens." And they sang praises to God, and God turned the enemy against one another, and they killed each other in confusion. And then the Spirit of God came upon one of the prophets and announced, "The battle belongs to the Lord." And that is what we see taking place here with Abram, that the battle belongs to the Lord.

And so, in verse 16, "He" - Abram - "brought back all the goods," - all the stolen goods that have been wrongfully taken from Sodom and Gomorrah and from the other cities; Abram brought them back - "and also brought back his relative Lot with all his possessions, and also the women, and the people." - referring to all the servants that Lot had, who watched over his flocks and cared for, all the people who worked for him. And what we see here is a great example of a just war, that it was right to do what Abram did. And Abram fought to protect the innocent lives of Lot and the others who were held captive, and to retrieve their stolen property. And Abram was prepared for this, as he had already trained over 300 men to protect his own possessions should there be an army that would come against him. So in a sense, they had the castle doctrine even back then.

So this leads us to, number four, "the adoration." In verse 17, we read, "Then after his return" - after Abram's return - "from defeating these kings, the kings of Sodom went out to meet him." Yeah, the kings of Sodom didn't really even have enough fortitude to go with Abram in this fight. It was their own possessions that was taken. It was their own people who were hauled off. But they are so weak and cowardly, because it is such a wicked city. And so, when Abram comes back, they greet him. It says, "They went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (which is, the king's valley)."

And there's another man there in verse 18: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine." Now Melchizedek is a real person; and it's not a Christophany, and it's not a theophany, it's a real person whose name is Melchizedek who will prefigure the coming of Christ one day; and the book of Hebrews will make that very clear to us. But Melchizedek prefigured Christ in this sense: he was both a king and a priest. He was a king. In fact, his name means "king of righteousness" or "my God is just"; and he was also a priest, which means that he was one who had access to God. This is

before the Levitical sacrificial system and the priestly system, so he's not a part of that. But he is referred to as a priest, because he's a worshiper of God, and he would bring sacrifices to God. And so, "He brought out bread and wine," – hospitality for these returning victors – "now he was a priest of God Most High."

Verse 19, "And he blessed him" – Melchizedek blessed Abram – "and said, 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High.'" He understands that God must be with Abram. And we will see next week when Abram actually entered into a saving relationship with God, when he was justified by faith. And so at this point, Abram is just a God-fearing man. He is a man of principle. He is a man of convictions. He is a man who has heard the voice of God, who called him out of Ur of Chaldees, and who has brought him down into Canaan, the Promised Land, but he has not yet entered into a saving relationship with God. He has not yet had the righteousness of Christ imputed to his account. That will be in the next chapter, chapter 15.

But nevertheless, Melchizedek recognizes that God must be with Abram, because, "There is no way you could have won that victory in the face of overwhelming odds, except the God of heaven and earth is with you and has given you the victory." And so, "He blessed Abram and said, 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High.'" And that name for God means that He's sovereign, that that He is the supreme authority in heaven and earth, that in the organizational chart of the universe, He is at the very apex top, and there is no one on God's level, and there is no one above God's level, and everyone and everything is under the feet of Almighty God. "He is God Most High, and possessor of heaven and earth." And that means that he recognizes that God is the Creator of heaven and earth, that God is the owner and possessor of heaven and earth, that God is the upholder and sustainer of heaven and earth, and that God is the ruler and administrator over heaven and earth. That's quite a statement that Melchizedek makes here.

And then in verse 20, "And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hands." Again, Melchizedek gives glory to God for this victory, that it is God who has delivered his enemies into the hands of

Abram, that is not Abram who is undertaking his own cause but that it is God who has undertaken Abram's cause. And then at the end of verse 20, "And he gave him a tenth of all." This is not to be understood as teaching tithing, this is to be understood as Abram giving to Melchizedek out of the spoils of victory, which was a common practice in this day and time and throughout the rest of the Old Testament as far as that goes, that after there would be a great victory. The victor would be so generous with what he has taken in the spoils of his victory that he would share it with others who were either fighting with him or at least emotionally supportive with him. And when we read in Hebrews 7, verse 4, we read, "Abram, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils." The idea there is not even giving a tenth of everything, but a tenth of the best of the spoils. He gives to Melchizedek.

And so, that is quite a meeting that takes place here, and for us to learn from this. Melchizedek recognizes that God must be with Abram. And there needs to be the same inexplicable element in our Christian lives, that there can be no explanation for my life apart from God being in my life, that there can be no explanation for the joy that I have in the midst of difficult times except God is in my life, there can be no explanation for the steadfastness of my life during times of difficulty and adversity except God is in my life, there can be no explanation for the wise choices that we would make that continue to lead us down a path in the will of God except that God is with us. And so there needs to be this element of the inexplicable in each of our lives, that only God can do this.

Well, this leads us, finally, to "the self-pronunciation" in verse 21. This chapter now concludes with Abram taking another step in his humility. And I want you to note in verse 21, "The king of Sodom said to Abram, 'Give the people to me.' The king of Sodom says, 'Give me the people, and you take the goods for yourself,'" such that there would be a dividing of what was taken by Abram. And for the king of Sodom to actually have the audacity to say this: he didn't lift a finger; he just stayed with the women and children there at the oaks of Mamre, while Abram took his fighting men and went and won this great victory, and he comes back with everything. And the king of Sodom says, "Oh, that's great; let's split it now." That's what he's asking for.

In verse 22, "Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, "I have made Abram rich.'" Abram is a man of principle. He is a man with a clear conscience. He is a man with a heightened sense of what is right and wrong. And Abram does not want anyone to have the idea that it's the king of Sodom who has made him rich. And so he actually turns down this offer to split it with the king of Sodom, and instead gives everything back to the king of Sodom, because it wasn't his to begin with. And he's not going to take a part of this, though he's given Melchizedek a tenth of the choicest part.

And so, we see in Abram here a self-humiliation. We see a self-renunciation. We see in Abram a selflessness. We see Abram coming down to even lower levels of humility, which is good, because God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. And all of this is really a part of God preparing the heart of Abram – for what we will see next week – when he comes to decisive, saving faith in God. And so, Abram commendably turns everything over to the king of Sodom, because in reality was his to begin with; it wasn't Abram's. Abram just stepped in to do what's right, just like you and I need to step in and do what's right, regardless of personal gain.

So the last verse, verse 24, Abram says, "I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten." In other words, "The only thing that I'll take is to allow my 318 men who actually fought the battle, to let them have something to eat out of all of this," no doubt, referring to even parts of the livestock. "I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and share of the men who went with me; let them take their share." And, in a sense, even that was right, because "the laborer is worthy of his wages." And these 318 men have put their shoulder to the plow, they've put their nose into the battle, and they ought to at least be able to eat as a result of this.

And so, what do we learn from this? This is a complicated chapter, with lots of kings and people and places, and Abram and Lot. I think when we boil this down to the bottom line, I think we have to understand that there are decisive moments in our Christian life when we must be men and women of action, when we must step out of the grandstands and get onto the field; and in those times, we must act heroically out of principle, to do what is right; that we must be men and women who see things not in fuzzy gray, but in black and white, and be willing to protect innocent life, to be able to stand with those who are being abused, to be able to protect those who cannot protect themselves, to be a defender of those when they would come under attack, even verbal attack; that we would be willing to stick our chin out and to be like Abram here, and put ourselves in harm's way, if necessary, when others find themselves in harm's way.

And we need to be prepared now, today; not wait until the crisis comes. Abram was out ahead, and he had already trained 318 men for a day like this. He wasn't naïve. He wasn't innocently naïve of evil and danger that is out there, but that he was prepared and ready for when the danger came. And you and I need to be prepared and ready on the front end. We need to be ready and prepared even today for what lies ahead tomorrow, and to have already counted the cost, and to be willing to step into the fray and to step into the battle, if necessary, to do what is right, in this day and time.

The last thing that I would say is the most decisive action that every one of us here today must take is that decisive step of faith to commit our life to Jesus Christ. I would say most of us here today have come to that intersection of life where we have chosen to enter through the narrow gate, and to deny ourself, and to take up a cross and become a follower of Jesus Christ. That is a decisive step of action, to turn our back to the world, to no longer trust in ourselves, to give us a standing before God, but to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and to commit our lives to Him. And if you have never taken that decisive step, this is the most important step for you to take.

And I'll explain it to you like this, that God is a holy God, and that there is no sin that dwells in His presence. He is an infinitely holy God. And we

have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We are all sinners who have broken the Law of God. And the wages of sin is death, which is eternal condemnation and eternal punishment; and that is the state in which every person on planet earth finds themselves in. They cannot pull themselves up by their own bootstraps and raise themselves up to the heights of heaven. And in light of such a predicament, because we could not pull ourselves up to God, God had to leave heaven and come to earth; and He came to this earth in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, who was born of a virgin, who lived a sinless and perfect life, who went to the cross and there died, hanging suspended between heaven and earth, bearing the sins of everyone who would turn to Him and trust Him for eternal life. He was buried, and on the third day He was raised from the dead. He is ascended back to the right hand of God the Father, and He now offers forgiveness and righteousness and eternal life to everyone who will turn away from this world and turn away from dead religion and turn away from self-righteousness, and will turn to Jesus Christ and throw yourself upon His mercy.

That is the offer that the gospel makes to you, but it requires a decisive step of action on your part. And if you've never taken that step of faith, I plead with you, I urge you this very day, while you have time, to in your heart of hearts do business with God, and believe in His Son Jesus Christ this very moment. If you will do that, you will find the Savior will take you in, He will clothe you with His righteousness, He will wash away your sins, He will come and live inside of you, and He will be preparing a place for you in heaven one day when you die. Be decisive; commit your life to Jesus Christ. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father in heaven, what a passage we have looked at today. And I pray that our take home from this is that we would be willing to be men and women like Abram, be willing to do what is right at great personal cost, to be willing to enter into Your cause, to risk even our own life, if called upon, in order to do what is just, what is equitable, and what is righteous before You. So, Father, plant this inside of our heart this day. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.