

## **Abram: Learning to walk by faith Genesis 13 - 14**

If you are new or visiting; *a special warm welcome to you.*  
We trust you enjoy your time with us.

Today we will be having communion. If it is your practice to participate in this we welcome you to join with us in celebrating the Lord's Supper. If this is not your custom or if you are unsure of what to do please just pass the emblems (bread and wine) to the person next to you.

Last week we looked at God's call for Abram to leave his country and people and go to a land which God would show him. He went by faith, believing what God had promised. We likened that to our call to follow Christ. But like Abram we can have problems moving out in faith. We can be delayed, doubt and be diverted in the process. But at last Abram is where God called him and he now has to learn to walk by faith in the daily events of life in his new land.

He arrives back at Bethel (the house of God), pitches his tent (a temporary dwelling) and builds an altar (witness to his worship of God). He has increased his herds and flocks and is very wealthy but he is still living a nomadic life with no sign that God's promise to him will be fulfilled. How does he live as a pilgrim and stranger in this foreign land?

### **Resigning his rights 13:4-13**

Quarrelling among the herdsmen of Lot and Abram causes friction and something has to be done. Lot has done very well by being with his uncle. But his uncle's convictions are not his and like every parent child type relationship there comes a time to separate. Abram has learned much from his experiences but Lot sees this as a new opportunity. Abram lives by faith; Lot lives by sight. So when the choice comes, the one living by faith does not take his natural rights as the senior and guardian nor his rights as the promised inheritor of the land but gives Lot the first option. Abram may have been testing Lot to see if he had learned anything during his time with Abram. But Lot chooses what he sees as best for him and departs toward the best land. Abram may have been disappointed in Lot and had some concern about how he would cope with close proximity to these cities but he left it in God hands.

### **Resting in God 13:14-18**

Having apparently got the bad end of the bargain, Abram may have had cause to regret and become depressed. But God again confirms the promise regarding the land including that he has just relinquished. And he is encouraged to walk the length and breadth of it and enjoy it all. So he moves his tent to Hebron and builds an altar there.

### ***Rescuing Lot* 14:1-16**

Some of the names and places described in the skirmish between 4 Sumerian kings with 5 Jordanian kings are consistent with recent archaeological findings. Being nomadic may have prevented Abram from being in the path of the Eastern kings as they swept down the west coast cities, then back inland to the Dead sea where the final stand of the Jordanian kings was made. The Eastern kings captured and looted the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and took Lot captive. It is likely that this successful army, having swept all before it were complacent thinking that all opposition had been wiped out and as they headed home and were not expecting a nomadic sheik with a trained army to appear. Abram still had a heart for his nephew to step in and rescue him, despite Lot's poor decisions.

### ***Recognizing God's people* 14:17-20**

As Abram returns from the rescue, he meets this strange character Melchizadek. This man would have retreated into the oblivion of the others in the chapter if it were not for 2 other passages of scripture (Ps 110:4, Heb 7:1-22) that use him as an illustration of a priesthood, superior to Aaron and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is a king and a priest who blesses Abram and "God most high". Abram does not view Melchizadek as a rival but recognizes this king/priest as his superior by giving him tithes that would be given to God.

### ***Relating to others* 14:21-24**

For Abram to involve 3 of his Hebron neighbours in his rescue of Lot, he must have been on good terms with them. When he is offered the spoils of battle as a normal right he refuses any for himself but accepts that his allies see it differently and allows them some of the spoil. This is not a double standard but recognition of the normal rights and processes that others in society expect.

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## How can I walk by Faith today?

God has called us into a relationship with him through Jesus Christ. We also know that without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6). We not only step out in faith when we come to know Jesus Christ but also are to continue to walk by faith every day of our sojourn here on earth. Abram illustrates 5 characteristics of living by faith for us to follow.

**1. Resigning out rights.** This passage and highlights the difference between Abram walking by faith and Lot walking by sight (2 Cor 5:7). Abram stood back while Lot took the best. And he did not argue. Do we fret and worry when we do not get a fair deal? Or do we trust God that the minor offences we brood over are in his hands. Abram was looking beyond the fertile Jordan plain to “a city with foundations whose architect and builder is God”. (Heb 11:10) That is what faith does. It looks beyond the present things that are seen as temporary to the things that are unseen as eternal? (2 Cor 4:16-18)

**2. Resting in God.** Living by faith means that you take time out to renew your relationship with the Lord. Communication with God is what he wants and you gain strength from it. And as you move on, you continue to “build altars” to maintain that close contact with God.

**3. Rescuing the Lost.** Concern for those who are lost and need help is part of living by faith. Do we know something of the compassion of God for the lost? Abram when confronted with a situation in which he could help did not sit back and bemoan the state of the world. He enlisted others to help and set out to rescue his relative. Am I reaching out to those around, or do I smugly sit back and say “they made their choice and now they have the consequences!”

**4. Recognizing God’s servants.** Abram recognized that Melchizadek was a king and priest of God. He did not debate who was the greatest or more right in their relationship with and understanding of God. Abram even gave tithes to this stranger. It is easy to be suspicious of other Christians who are involved with other churches. We need to be encouraging and supportive of all who name Christ as their Lord.

**5. Relating to unbelievers.** We are often told that as Christians, we are in the world but not of the world. If ever this was true of anyone, it was Abram. Yet we find him relating to neighbours in the area where he lived in near Hebron, asking for their assistance when there was a particular task to be done. Then after the battle, the civil authorities offer the normal courtesy of the spoils to the victor. Again, he does not take up that natural right but leaves it in God’s hands to bless him. He did not want to give them cause to boast in being a contributor to Abram’s wealth.

### Challenge for today

1. Much is made of “our rights” today. Does the Christian really have any rights in this world? How did Paul feel about his rights in 1 Cor 9:1-23. Why was he willing to give up his rights?

2. How is your altar building? Keeping in touch with God when circumstances seem to be against us will put things back in perspective.

3. How concerned am I about those perishing around me? Do I demonstrate the compassion and mercy of God in my dealings with people around me?

4. Do I regard other Christians with suspicion if they don’t belong to “our” church? Or am I keen to share our common faith without looking for points to score over them?

5. Do I have friends outside the church who I can relate to and bear witness to my relationship with God? Is there any difference between the way I do things and the way the world around does things?

Notes