

## Maturing in the Faith

Genesis 14: 11-24

As we continue to follow the life of Abraham, it is easy to discern the spiritual growth he enjoyed as he walked with the Lord. In chapter 12 we found him making an ill-advised trip to Egypt due to a famine in the land. He concocted a silly scheme to preserve his life instead of trusting in the Lord.

Some time has passed and we are beginning to see a very different Abraham. He is again faced with a difficult situation, but his response this time is much different than before. Rather than fleeing in doubt and fear, Abraham stands bold in his faith, willing to confront his struggle, all while depending solely upon the Lord. Clearly Abraham is maturing in his faith.

The Christian journey is much the same. Like Abraham we must walk by faith, trusting the Lord to provide for our needs and lead us safely through. As we consider the [examples](#) of faith revealed in the text, I want to preach on: [Maturing in the Faith](#).

**I. The Courage of Abraham** (11-16) – Here we find a very different man than we witnessed in chapter 12. He has become a man of courageous faith. Consider:

**A. The Difficulty** (11-12) – In order to fully understand the current situation, we need to understand the opening verses of the chapter. Chedorlaomer, king of Elah, along with a confederation of kings has forced the nations within the plain, including Sodom and Gomorrah to pay tribute unto them. This forced tribute, resulting in financial bondage, had gone on for twelve long years. In the thirteenth year, the kings of the plain decided they would no longer pay tribute, and they were invaded by Chedorlaomer and the other kings. The people were taken into bondage, and their goods were seized as tribute, including Lot, Abraham's nephew, who dwelt in Sodom.

- While we are not focusing on Lot in this study, an abiding principle remains. Lot chose to dwell in Sodom because it was well-watered and pleasing to the eye. If we stray from the Lord, and His purpose for our lives, we can expect to deal with the consequences of our choices. Satan likes to create havoc in our lives, robbing us of our peace and contentment.

**B. The Decisiveness** (13-14) – Fortunately one of the captives was able to escape and came bearing news that the nations had been taken into bondage, and Lot was among the captives. Here we discover the growth Abraham had experienced. Unlike his trip into Egypt, Abraham is no

longer gripped with fear and doubt. There is no hesitation in him now. Abraham immediately gathers his men, all 318 of them, to go against the kings of several nations in battle. A man of doubt and fear has become a man of unwavering courage and confidence in the Lord.

- Conflict is something most would rather avoid, but like Abraham we must be willing to stand for truth and right. The enemy will come against us, challenging our faith, and we must be willing to boldly stand, without hesitation. [Eph.6:11-13 – Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.](#) <sup>[12]</sup> [For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.](#) <sup>[13]</sup> [Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.](#) Some things are worth fighting for!

**C. The Deliverance (15-16)** – Miraculously God allowed Abraham and his 318 men to overcome and defeat Chedorlaomer and the other kings. They recovered all the goods that had been taken, Lot, the women, and everyone taken captive. God brought a resounding victory for Abraham.

- While I am well aware that I am no match for the enemy myself, I also know he is a defeated foe. Christ defeated Satan as He died on the cross, atoning eternally for our sin, and rising triumphant over death, hell, and the grave. The battle is not ours; it belongs to the Lord. We can face any situation with confident resolve that our Lord has the power and ability to provide victory! (Abraham refused to allow Lot to remain in bondage. We too must possess the determination to go after those who are in bondage to sin, revealing the Gospel that delivers!)

**II. The Courtesy toward Abraham (17-20)** – Here we discover the gratitude shown to Abraham by the kings of the plain and others who were affected by Chedorlaomer. Consider:

**A. The Association (17-18)** – Along with the kings of the plain, we are introduced to an interesting character – Melchizedek, king of Salem. He came bearing bread and wine. Melchizedek was the king of what would become Jerusalem, and identified as the priest of the most high God. Abraham was not the only man who served the Lord; Melchizedek did as well.

- I don't have time for a detailed study of Melchizedek, but he is a man worth our consideration. He is mentioned again in Hebrews chapter 7. There we discover that he was a man, but his father and mother are unknown. He just appears on the scene. He is recognized as King of Salem and referred to as a priest of God. Some contend he was a pre-incarnate Christ, and at the very least he stands a beautiful picture or type of the Christ to come. He brought forth bread and wine, pointing to the Bread of Life and the shed blood of Christ for our sin. Jesus Christ

is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the eternal High Priest, abiding ever to make intercession for us.

**B. The Appreciation** (19-20a) – Although Melchizedek was thankful for the courage of Abraham in pursuing his enemies, he gave all praise and honor to God. He offered blessing to Abraham, but the praise was reserved for God alone.

- Much too often we place our faith in men and often praise their efforts while failing to recognize the good hand of God in our lives. I am certainly not against offering gratitude and honor to those whom it is due, but we must maintain a proper perspective. All the blessings we enjoy in this life are from the hand of our Lord and Redeemer. God does use men to accomplish His divine will, but He alone is worthy of our praise and adoration.

**C. The Appropriation** (20b) – *And he gave him tithes of all.* There has been some confusion here in regard to who gave tithes to whom. The passage in Hebrews clears that up. *Heb.7:2 – To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace.* Abraham offered a tithe unto Melchizedek. It is apparent that Abraham knew Melchizedek was the priest of God; so as God's representative, Abraham offered a tithe to God through His priest, Melchizedek, as a form of worship.

- Abraham refused to receive blessing from the hand of God and not offer anything in return. He was compelled to offer a tithe unto the Lord as an act of worship. Unfortunately many today never grasp the giving of tithes as a form of worship. They see it as something that is expected and often give grudgingly, out of obligation instead of worship. Worship comes in many forms, and we must never exclude the giving of tithes unto the Lord as a form of accepted worship.

**III. The Character of Abraham** (21-24) – After dealing with Chedorlaomer and Melchizedek, Abraham is met by the king of Sodom. This encounter reveals much about Abraham's character. Notice:

**A. The Proposal** (21) – *And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.* The king was pleased that the residents of Sodom had been delivered safely, and he offers Abraham a very lucrative deal. He would be content to simply have the people returned safely, and offered to allow Abraham to keep all the goods and possessions he had recovered. Apparently the king wanted to reward Abraham for his good deed.

- Money and possessions are very tempting for many today. I know we all need a certain amount to survive, but many are consumed with the desire for more. The king assumed that Abraham would be pleased with the offer and gladly take the possessions. We must be careful not to allow the love and desire for money and possessions to dictate our lives. Those who are consumed with greed will never have enough; their thirst for wealth will never be satisfied.

**B. The Refusal** (22-24) – While Abraham stood to gain much wealth from the king's offer, he politely refused to accept anything, except what his men had eaten. Abraham refused to keep as much as a thread from a garment or a shoelace from a pair of shoes. He did request that the men who accompanied him be rewarded for their efforts. Abraham knew the possessions he had recovered belonged to the people God had delivered from bondage. It would have been unfair and greedy to rob them after their deliverance.

- Do you see a definitive change in Abraham from his journey into Egypt until now? While he could have gained much wealth, he decided to trust the Lord and depend solely upon Him to provide. He refused the lure of riches and determined to honor the Lord. Had he accepted this gift from the king, he would have been indebted to him and felt obligated to further support his agenda.
- There are a couple valuable lessons we can glean from this. First, like Abraham we need to trust the Lord to provide for us. I believe we ought to work in an effort to provide for our families, but the pursuit of riches should never be the goal of a believer. Second, we must be careful when presented with offers from this world. Money and the influence of society have caused much damage to the reputation of many. If we are expected to compromise our character in order to gain a dollar, we must be willing to walk away and trust the Lord. May it never be said that we sold out our convictions for money or possessions!

**Conclusion:** When you consider all we have discussed, Abraham encountered a miracle and was blessed by the Lord for his faithfulness. He walked with God and God honored his faith. Life is difficult at times, but even in the valley God is faithful and good. He will provide for His own. We must walk by faith and endeavor to honor Him in all we do. Are you struggling with faith? Do you find yourself depending on sources other than God? If so, come to Him and confess your need. He will provide the faith you need to endure. If you are unsaved, I urge you to come to Christ for salvation. He alone can fill the void in your life!