

Series: God & Abraham #1216

Title: Genesis 14.21-24

Abram's Faith in God Before the King of Sodom

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. It is good to be back with you after the weekend. On Friday we have finished our discussion around the identity of Melchizedek, whom we met in this fourteenth chapter of Genesis, verses 18-20. And I told you that this week we will pivot and close out chapter 14 by looking at verses 21-24. In a moment I will read those verses, summarize what they say, and then I want to put into dialogue Abram's response to the King of Sodom versus Abram's response to the King of Salem, who was Melchizedek. As we pivot from verse 20 to verse 21 in Genesis chapter 14, this is what we will do.

OK, I hope you will follow along with me as I read Genesis 14, verses 21-24. **"²¹ The king of Sodom said to Abram, 'Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.' ²² Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, ²³ that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abram rich.' ²⁴ I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share.'"**

What we learn here is that the King of Sodom makes a proposal and he is right to do so. *But* Abram rejects the proposal *with reason* and with *an exception*. I will repeat this: What we learn here is that the King of Sodom makes a proposal and he is right to do so. *But* Abram rejects the proposal *with reason* and with *an exception*. This week on *God Is* we will do what we always do, describing the meaning in these words. We will move with a certain pace, because I want to finish this chapter this week.

One of the resources that I really, *really*, like on the Book of Genesis is a gem I picked up used but in very good condition. It is a 500-page paperback book by WH Griffith Thomas called *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary*. I originally came upon this author when I used his book *Outline Studies in Luke* several years ago when I taught on Luke here on *God Is*. And so when I was getting ready to do Genesis I checked to see if William Henry Griffith Thomas had written on the first Book of the Bible, and sure enough he had. And I was able to secure this copy.

The reason I like it, and you will too, is because he writes in an outline format that is easy to follow. And his insights are *both deep and succinct*. It is hard to find commentaries that do both of those things with the text of the Bible. If they are succinct they are too often shallow. And if they are deep they are often not succinct, but long and even tedious. Well, Dr. Thomas – this English pastor, scholar, and teacher – who lived from 1861-1924 – he has written a very helpful, and devotionally minded, book that covers all of Genesis. And that is no small feat given Genesis is fifty chapters in length.

I am telling you about this author and his work because today I want to follow him as we look at these verses before us. Dr. Thomas does something most helpful here when he a) enumerates differences between Abram's response to the King of Sodom versus Abram's response to the King of Salem, who was Melchizedek. And b) he explains Abram's attitude in this scene – what drove Abram to respond to the King of Sodom the way he did. I will see if we can get to all of this today.

If you have been with us then you will recall all that we learned as we read of the interaction between Abram and Melchizedek. And remember that Melchizedek was a king – the King of Salem. And now here, in today's text, Abram has this interaction with another king, the King of Sodom. But the way Abram deals with each king is different. Quoting WH Griffith Thomas now, "How very remarkable is this difference! To the king of Salem [Melchizedek] the acknowledgement of dependence; to the king of Sodom the assertion of independence. To the king of Salem [Melchizedek] the admission of inferiority; to the king of Sodom the attitude of equality. To the king of Salem [Melchizedek] the spirit of humility; to the king of Sodom the attitude of dignity. How striking and really wonderful is this perfect balance of qualities (*Genesis: A Devotional Commentary*, 134). End of quote.

This is true, and I encourage you to see this in the text for yourself. Abram did make himself dependent on Melchizedek. He acknowledged Melchizedek as greater than himself. But to the King of Sodom Abram is independent, free to reject this king's proposal. As we have seen Abram was inferior to Melchizedek. I said this last week: Melchizedek was greater than Abram. But here, Abram and the king of Sodom are equals. And whereas to the king of Salem, Melchizedek, Abram expresses great humility, here with the king of Sodom Abram shows an attitude of dignity (as we shall see). In particular, if you have been with us, I think these wise words of Dr. Thomas will be insightful for you to consider. They were for me.

Now, second, WH Griffith Thomas explains Abram's attitude in this scene. What drove Abram to respond to the King of Sodom the way he did. He says it was Abram's *faith in God* that did it, and I wholeheartedly agree. In fact, it is very important to identify the strong faith of Abram in these closing verses of chapter 14, because when we get to chapter 15 we will find that God rewards Abram's *faith*. So that Genesis chapter 14 leads beautifully into Genesis chapter 15. Note this and I will remind you of it.

Our author friend speaks of a fourfold action and activity of Abram's faith in God. Harkening back to Melchizedek for a moment he says that Abram's *faith* was quick to see that Melchizedek was God's representative. And then second, specific to verses 21-24 that I have read for us, he writes (quote), "Faith is able to realize serious peril. Not always has a believer been able to see that success often means temptation, and victory the possibility of danger. Abraham saw this, and hence his unflinching attitude (135)." Very well said. I am going to talk more about this, but Abram was wise enough to see through the King of Sodom's offer and to reject it, because Abram knew that success meant temptation and victory meant danger. He could become beholden to Sodom, a very bad thing. So Abram rejects the offer.

This is very applicable to us. As Christ's people we should be very cautious and discerning about what proposals we accept from the world; what offers they make us that sound good and plentiful but really ought to be rejected. Maybe, for example, you have an offer from your company and it seems *perfect*. A promotion, more money, and some extra perks. But is it right for you to accept it? What does God want you to do? What might accepting this way forward mean for you, your family, and your walk with the Lord? Abram sets an example for us in this regard. Bring your *faith in God* to bear on such decisions.

See through the implications of your decision. Could success mean temptation? Could victory mean danger? I think it will be worth your while to ponder this even now.

Which leads to the third insight. Abram, using his *faith in God*, resisted the strong pressure to receive the honor paid by the King of Sodom. Instead Abram looked beyond the human king in order to see, with eyes of faith, The King of kings – Jesus Christ! And fourth, Abram's *faith* led him to depend on the provision of God in his life rather than on the provision the King of Sodom proposed. What this king offered Abram was substantial, but not as substantial as God's promise for all that promised land and the blessings that will come along with it. Griffith Thomas writes, "Thus Abraham could wait, and his faith expressed itself in patience, as he put God first. 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.' (135)."

These insights are all very true. And I would like to encourage you to spend some quiet time reading Genesis 14, verses 21-24. Match that to what has been said today. Get this again from godisministry.org and listen with your Bible open. Watch for Dr. Thomas' insights, derived directly from the Bible. These are the differences between Abram's response to the King of Sodom versus Abram's response to the King of Salem, who was Melchizedek. And Abram's attitude in this scene – what drove Abram to respond to the King of Sodom the way he did – was Abram's *faith*.

As we move along throughout this week I will point these truths out to you again from different angles, so stay tuned. And we will get into each verse, beginning next time. There is much to discover from our father Abraham, a great example for us. So come along tomorrow because God Is.

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