

# SERMON GUIDE

Genesis: The Faith of Abraham and the Long-Suffering God

Genesis 14:1-16



## ANNOUNCEMENTS/EVENTS (See the [tjclive.com](http://tjclive.com) for more details):

### ● SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

- **February 18** -- Group Connect
- **February 25** -- Missions Interest Meeting - 11:30AM - Room 301 in the gym
- **March 1** -- Engaging Truth Conference - TJC Students
- **March 2** -- TJC Women Gather Workshop
- **March 9** -- TJC Men -2nd Saturday - Annual Breakfast
- **March 29** -- Good Friday - 5:00PM & 6:30PM
- **March 30** -- Holy Saturday -- 5:00PM
- **March 31** -- Easter Sunday -- 8:30AM, 10:00AM, 11:30AM
- **June 17** -- Centrikid Camp
- **July 24** -- Arise Camps - TJC Students

## SERMON NOTES:

Good morning, church. We're so glad you're with us today. My name is Nick Judd; I'm one of the pastors here. Whether you're a long-time member, a first-time visitor, or something in between, I want to welcome you. I hope you're having a great day so far. I pray that the Lord speaks to your heart through His Word during our time together. If you would, please go ahead and turn to Genesis 14; that's where we'll be here in a moment. While you're getting there, allow me to remind you of the context of our passage. We're making our way through the book of Genesis, and in the last few sermons, we've been looking at the life of Abraham. And not just the life of Abraham but also the unfolding of the covenant that God made with him.

Abraham believed the promises God made him, and God said that because Abraham believed, He counted him as righteous. Abraham was a sinner, just like you and me. A man deserving the judgment of God, just like you and me. And yet, because Abraham trusted God, God forgave him and declared him not guilty. That is what the Bible means when it says that Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness. God saves, forgives, and accepts those who place their trust in Him.

However, even though Abraham is brought into this restored relationship with God, he still continues to be a broken, imperfect human, just like us. We saw the failures, sins, and faltering of faith in Abraham over the last couple of weeks. But we also saw that God remained faithful and long-suffering to Abraham. In Genesis 14, we'll see Abraham in one of his better moments. He is going to make a decision in faith, and God is going to bless that decision. Here's what these three stages of faith that I've described could be categorized as:

### **3 stages in the life of faith:**

- God counted Abraham righteous by faith.
- God's long-suffering upheld Abraham even when his faith faltered.
- God blessed Abraham's efforts when he acted in faith.

### **It looks the same in your life and mine. See if you can relate to this:**

- You trusted in Jesus and were accepted by God and justified by faith.
- At some point, although you still possessed your trust in Jesus, you were not acting on it, yet God did not forsake you.
- Then, there were times you acted on your faith, and God blessed your efforts.

Let's read our text and see how this third stage fleshes out for Abraham. If you would please stand with me for the reading of God's Word. Genesis 14:1-16. Let me warn you ahead of time so you can pre-judge me. I'm getting ready to read a bunch of names that I'm going to butcher – just wanted to make sure your expectations were nice and low – like on the floor kind of low.

### **Exegesis: Genesis 14:1-16**

As we have seen, Abraham is already justified by faith. That means that because he has trusted God, he is already in right standing with God. That remains true for him in his high moments as well as his low ones. The same remains true for those of all of us who have trusted Christ. That was the first category of faith that I mentioned. Then, we saw his failings and how God upheld him despite those failings in the previous weeks. I'm belaboring this because it's important to keep those two things in mind as we look at today's text. We're going to see that God blesses Abraham's practical walking out of his faith, but we have to see that in light of his justification by faith and God's long-suffering and sustaining grace through his failures. Why? Because that's what He does in our lives.

With that said, here's what I want us to get from Abraham's rescue of Lot:

### **God blesses decisions made in faith.**

How do I know that Abraham's decision was made in faith?

**VS14 -- *When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.***

- He gathers his 318 men to go and fight 4 armies. Now, granted, these were not kingdoms as we would think of them today. They were probably more like the City-States that you learned about in history class, but we're still talking about thousands of men. These were armies that were powerful enough to subjugate 5 other City-States. There's no possible way that Abraham made this decision without acknowledging that he needs the supernatural help of God.

**VS 15&16 -- 15 And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. 16 Then he brought back all the possessions and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.**

- The mission was a success.
- Also, we see that this decision is honored by God in the following passage where Melchizedek, the priest of God, blesses Abraham and says, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 and blessed be God Most High, **who has delivered your enemies into your hand!**”

This is how God works. When we make decisions, trusting that God will come through, He blesses those decisions. That’s not to say that if we just make ourselves believe something hard enough, we’ll put God over a barrel, and He’s obligated to do what we want. He’s not a genie, and He’s not obligated to do anything for us. What we’re observing here is a principle – not that faith is some magic substance that manifests things for us. The principle is that God is pleased when we recognize our dependence on Him and act in that dependence. Because He is pleased with those acts of faith, He blesses them however He sees fit.

Let’s take a step back from the immediate text, though, and ask, why is this principle being communicated here in this part of the Bible? God is using Moses to write Genesis. Moses is leading the children of Israel from Egypt, through the wilderness, to the Promised Land. Catch this, “The Promised Land.” What promise?

The promise was originally made to Abraham. So, what is God communicating through Moses to these Israelites? He’s communicating this idea that God blesses decisions made in faith.

Look at the parallels between the experience of the Israelites, that is, Moses’ immediate audience, and this passage.

- 1. Abraham was called out of Ur to go on a journey to the land that God swore to give him. Not based on anything in Abraham but solely based on His gracious choice of this man.**
  - a. The Israelites are called out of Egypt to go on a journey to the land that God swore to give them, not based on anything in them but solely based on His gracious choosing of them. **Deuteronomy 7:6-9 -- 6 “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful**

***God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,***

**2. Abraham came out of Egypt wealthy.**

- a. The Israelites came out of Egypt wealthy. **Exodus 12:35-36 -- 35** *The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. 36* **And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.**

**3. Abraham wrestled against his unbelief.**

- a. This was the whole problem with the Israelites all the way to Canaan.

**4. When Abraham did act in faith, God gave him victory.**

- a. This is the precedent that Moses is trying to communicate to the Israelites. Remember when he sent spies into the Promised Land, and 10 came back saying, "There's no way we can do this. They are far greater than we are." But Joshua and Caleb said, in effect, "The numbers are irrelevant. God is for us and has promised that land to us." In a situation like that can you see how this account of Abraham taking 300 against thousands might be relevant? And it's not just here; it's all through scripture.
  - i. Gideon - 300 v. 135,000
  - ii. David and Goliath - shepherd boy against the warrior-champion of the Philistines
  - iii. King Hezekiah - besieged by Sennacherib, and the Lord slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night.
  - iv. Jesus called 12 apostles - to turn the entire world upside down.

What we see in this account of Abraham going to rescue Lot is the same as what Moses would have wanted the Israelites to see.

God will provide the victory. What He asks of you is not just to believe but to go in faith.

**God blesses decisions made in faith.**

Now, that's going to apply to the life of the believer in a thousand different ways depending on the individual circumstance, but the principle remains the same. The victory is found in faith. Stepping out and relying on God is something that pleases Him. And because it pleases Him, He blesses it.

Abraham's act of faith here is also surely motivated in part by his past failures. And we know what that's like, too, don't we? Why does he have 318 men trained for war? Why is he so decisive in this account compared to the way we've seen him handle perilous situations in the past? I think it's because in the process of sanctification (God changing us and making us into who and what He wants us to be) past failures motivate future victory. There is no waste in the economy of God. Abraham's sins and his faltering faith are tools in the hand of God to make him into what the Bible will later call "The Man of Faith." (Gal. 6:9)

The theme of God's long-suffering causes us to look at the other man in our account, Lot. Lot, unfortunately, to this point, has not learned from his failures. And yet, it is not just Abraham who rescues Lot, but God through Abraham. And this is our second main point this morning.

### **God is long-suffering.**

Let's do a quick survey of this man Lot's life in the Bible.

- Genesis 12 - Follows Abraham as he leaves his homeland. Not so bad.
- Genesis 13 - Lot and Abraham both grow wealthy. Abraham gives him the choice of which part of the land to take because there was some conflict with their herdsman over the amount of grazing ground compared to all their livestock.
- Lot chooses the best-looking land. Seems pretty obvious that Lot is being selfish here instead of honoring Abraham as his elder and the man who is likely responsible for Lot's wealth in the first place. Strike one.
- Lot moves close to Sodom, which is already identified as being exceedingly wicked. Strike two.
- Genesis 14 - Now, we find Lot living inside this wicked city. Strike three.
- **And yet...**God, through Abraham, rescues him. Guess where he goes...back to Sodom. That's four.
- Later in Genesis 19, we'll find Lot not just in the city but at the Gate of the City - which is a term meaning that he is now a man of social or political influence and leadership in this wicked place. After all this, he's dug into Sodom.
- The Lord pronounces judgment on Sodom. The angels of the Lord are in Lot's house. An angry mob outside calls for the angels that they might molest them, and Lot offers his daughters to the mob to try and appease them. I think we're at five.
- **And yet...**God rescues Lot again. The angels have to physically drag Lot and his family out of Sodom to get them to leave prior to the city's destruction. Six.
- They tell Lot to go to the mountains, and he asks to remain closer to the city of Zoar. Seven.
- He eventually goes to the mountains, destitute, all his wealth gone, where he gets drunk, and his daughters have relations with him in a sinful scheme to keep the family line going. Eight.
- **And yet...**When Moses leads the Israelites through the wilderness in Deuteronomy 2, long after Lot is dead and gone, he tells the people not to harass the Moabites or the Ammonites in their lands because those were given by God to Lot and his descendants.
- Finally...listen to **2 Peter 2:4-9 -- 4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; 5 if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7 and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked 8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over**

***their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment***

- In this contrast between the fate of the wicked and the rescue of the righteous, on what side of that divide does Lot fall? The righteous.

When I teach kids to read the Bible, I teach them to ask 3 questions of the text: What does this say about God, the World, and Me? The first being the most important. Our passage is the middle of Lot's life story and here in the middle of it, what do we learn about God?

### **God is long-suffering.**

He puts up with us far longer than we can imagine. Not because there is anything in us to put up with – look at Lot – but because He is just that good.

As Erik mentioned last week, **2 Timothy 2:13 - *if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.***

So here we have two lives in one historical account. Both belong to God. Both were declared righteous by God. But one is taking a turn and beginning to act in faith, even though he's got more blunders to come. And the other is still stubbornly living in the consequences of his ungodly choices. And yet, God's grace abounds to both.

God gives Abraham the victory in this impossible situation because he acts in faith, and God blesses the decision made in faith. And Lot receives the benefit of that blessing even while he is still behaving faithlessly because of God's long-suffering.

### **God's covenant faithfulness to Abraham and Abraham's act of faith actually results in God's faithfulness to faithless Lot.**

Let me say that again:

### **God's covenant faithfulness to Abraham and Abraham's act of faith actually results in God's faithfulness to faithless Lot.**

God is long-suffering. Aren't you grateful we have a God like this? When we're walking in faith, He gives us victory and blesses our efforts, but even when we are faithless, He remains faithful.

If this passage is giving us two poles: Abraham's blessed decision made in faith on one side and Lot's broken condition as a result of his own repeated sinful choices on the other, I wonder where you are on that line today.

Maybe you haven't trusted Christ, and you're not even on that line. Not everyone is. Not everyone was rescued from Sodom before the Lord sent fire down on it. The message here is not, even if you're living in sin, it's cool; God will still help you. No, 2 Peter told us that God helped Lot, even in his sin, because he belonged to Him. Because Lot trusted God despite the poor choices he made.

**There's three options I want you to consider as I give some application points to think about.**

1. If you're walking with the Lord, seeking to please Him and obey Him, as imperfectly as those attempts may be, be encouraged today. He sees your faith, and He blesses it. Maybe you're fighting through some things. Know that the ultimate victory is guaranteed. There is a 100% chance that you will come out on top in the final analysis. Take heart. Romans 8 says if God is for you, who could be against you? Or maybe you've got a big decision to make. The right decision is the one made in faith. He cares far less about what job you choose to accept, what school you decide to go to, what path you take to resolve that financial or relational situation than He does about how you make that decision. Is the decision made in faith? Or in self-reliance and unbelief?
2. If you belong to the Lord, dwelling in a place you shouldn't be, this passage isn't all comfort for you. It's also a warning. Lot lost everything more than once. God loved Lot enough to wreck his life. Hebrews 12 says that the Lord disciplines the ones He loves. And that discipline can be as catastrophic as it needs to be to lead you to repentance. If you need rescuing, call out to the long-suffering God for rescue. And when He does it, don't go back to that place you never should have been in the first place. Or maybe this isn't you, but it's someone you love. You've got a wayward child, parent, sibling, friend – keep calling them back to Christ, but take solace in the long-suffering of God. Hold out hope. His perfect patience is far greater than yours. He knows how to rescue those who belong to Him.
3. And our friends here today who don't find themselves in any of those categories. For you, this is a nice moral lesson from an ancient book that doesn't have much bearing on your day-to-day at all. This ancient book is the voice of the God who made you. That makes it relevant to you in every way. If you're here today breathing, resisting your Creator, it's just further evidence of His long-suffering. He has brought you here today, and this is what you need to know more than anything. The Almighty, Holy, Creator of all things is just. He, in His justice, has pronounced judgment on all mankind. You don't have to wait till you die to see how you'll fare. Jesus said that the overarching judgment has already been made and you stand condemned. Separated. Cut off from the God who made you and from eternal life. And yet...that phrase has come up multiple times today. And yet...God who is rich in mercy, the long-suffering God sent His Son. Jesus came into the world, lived a perfect life in place of, on behalf of all who would place their trust in Him. Then He died a sinner's death in place of, on behalf of all who would place their trust in Him. He rose on the third day and is seated at the right hand of the Father ready and willing to credit that perfect life and sinner's death to all who call upon Him. Here's what that means: The perfect sinless record that you need in order to be called a friend of God, like Abraham, in order to be counted righteous, like Abraham – Jesus says, "I'll give that to you for free." The just penalty that you owe to God for your sins. Jesus says, "I've taken that for you." Turn from yourself and your ways. Turn from being the god of your own life and ask God to

forgive you and save you because of what Jesus has done for you, trusting Him to do it, and guess what? He'll do it.

Whatever one of those categories you find yourself in this morning, God will hear you if you call on Him in faith. If you want to call on Him with someone else or just want to talk about that, we'll have people up here. Christians in need of a brother or sister to pray with, come pray. Friends who need to call on Christ to save you, come pray.

Let me end the message and start that time of response by praying for us.

## LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you GROW in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you GO to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?

## BUILD UP

- **REVIEW:**
  - Read Genesis 12:10-20 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
  - What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
  - Additional Scripture:
    - Isaiah 40:31
    - Joshua 1:9
    - 1 Chronicles 28:20
    - John 16:33
    - Proverbs 16:9
    - Psalm 37:23
    - John 6:38-40
    - Philippians 2:5-8
    - Hebrews 12:3
- **REFLECT:**
  - How did Abraham take a step of faith in verse 14?
  - Why was he able to be courageous this time?
  - How did God bless Abraham's step of faith?
  - How does this passage parallel the experience of the Israelites?



- How does Lot benefit from Abraham's faithfulness?
- **RESPOND:**
  - Have you seen God bless steps of faith in your life?
  - What step of faith has been in front of you that you've been too afraid to take?
- **MEDITATE:**
  - John 16:33 -- I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."
- **MEMORIZE:**
  - Isaiah 40:31 -- But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

## SEND OUT

- **GROW:** How will you abide in Christ this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **GO:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story or the gospel?
- **PRAYER:**
  - Pray over any request from your group members.
  - Director of Technical Production - **John Hogan**



- Ministry - **Journey Worship Co.**
- **Pray for our long-term families on the field:**
  - The Wilsons
  - The Grays
  - The Starks
- **Pray for our mid-term sent ones on the field:**
  - Kaesi

- **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG): Chinese in Angola**



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- **Population in country:** 56,000
- **Global population:** 15,879,200
- **Christian Adherent:** 1.05%
- **Evangelical:** 0.70%
- **Primary Religion:** Non-religious
- **Primary Language:** Chinese, Mandarin
- **Summary:** In the last couple of decades, thousands of construction workers, engineers, doctors, cooks and petroleum engineers have migrated from China to Angola. They are extracting oil and developing Angola's damaged infrastructure. Angola is one of China's largest suppliers of oil. The Chinese companies are using local materials, but hiring Chinese people, so this is not providing jobs for the Angolans. The Angolans resent this situation, especially since it also means higher prices for them. There has been a lot of crime against Chinese citizens and many Chinese are leaving Angola.
- **Prayer Focus:** Pray that Angolan Christians would help lead them to salvation. Pray that the Chinese would depend on Jesus Christ alone. Pray that Chinese believers would worship the same Lord with Angolan believers as an example of unity and love in a situation where there is sometimes hostility between the two groups. Pray for a disciple making movement to grow among the Chinese in Angola.
- Want to keep up with other Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>