

“The Original Braveheart” (Genesis 14:1-24)

Too much comfort is dangerous...literally. Researchers at the University of California at Berkeley did an experiment some time ago that involved introducing an amoeba into a perfectly stress-free environment: ideal temperature, optimal concentration of moisture, and constant food supply. The amoeba had an environment to which it had to make no adjustment whatsoever. So you would guess this was one happy, little amoeba. Whatever it is that gives amoebas ulcers and high blood pressure was gone. Yet, oddly enough, it died.

Apparently there is something about all living creatures, even amoebas that demand challenge. We require change, adaptation, and challenge the way we require food and air. Comfort alone will kill us.¹ The reason is simple. God created man something on the order of a rubber band. A rubber band is made to stretch. When it is not being stretched it is small and relaxed, but as long as it remains in that shape it is not doing what it was made to do. When it stretches, it is enlarged; it becomes tense and dynamic, and it does what it was made to do.² God created you to stretch as you face challenges.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) once said, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”³ What kind of man or woman are you in the midst of challenge and controversy? Are you dependent upon the Lord or are you consumed with worry and doubt? Today, God is calling you and me to rise up in His strength and be people of courage and conviction. In Genesis 14:1-24, we will learn how Abram demonstrated courage and conviction and we will be challenged to follow his example.

The first twelve verses serve as an introduction to this chapter. We are introduced to the first war ever recorded in Scripture—a war between four eastern kings and five southern kings. It is interesting to note that “**Shinar**” (i.e., Babylon, modern-day Iraq) initiated this first war mentioned in the Bible (14:1-2).⁴ Verse 4 tells us that the southern kings had been subjugated for twelve years. In the thirteenth year, they attempted to throw off their shackles and establish independence.⁵ On the surface, this war is merely an international power struggle to control a strategic commercial land bridge between Mesopotamia and Egypt. Whoever controlled this land bridge maintained a monopoly on international trade.

In response, the eastern kings launched a punishing assault that nipped this rebellion in the bud (14:5-7). The eastern kings defeated everyone who opposed them.⁶ They were an enemy that seemed invincible, relentless, unstoppable, striking fear into every heart as they steamrolled over every opposing military force. In 14:8-9, the southern kings drew up battle lines. In spite of the overwhelming odds, the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, with their allies, decided that possible defeat was better than guaranteed slavery. So they dug in for all-out battle in the valley of Siddim, which was full of tar pits.⁷ The five southern kings felt that these pits would be a natural defense. However, the outcome was not what they had hoped—the southern kings were routed and many fell into the tar pits (14:10).⁸ Those that didn’t fall into them fled to the hills.

In 14:11-12, we come to the point of the suspenseful plot of this narrative. Moses writes, “**Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed. They also took Lot, Abram’s nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom.**” What a commentary on the poor decision of Lot in Genesis 13. Lot had chosen to act on the basis of economic self-interest and had disregarded the covenant God had made with Abram (12:1-3). He separated from his uncle and moved into Sodom (14:12).

About the time that he made this move, he and his whole family were taken captive by the four eastern kings. But all that Lot had gained by taking advantage of Abram and rejecting the promises of God was lost in an instant.

What painful irony. Lot had greedily chosen the best part of the land, and his choice had proven disastrous. Lot, and everything he owned, was carried off to who knows where. Turkey? Read between the lines. Lot had seen agonizing deaths and rapes, the traditional wake of ancient victory. Perhaps he had lost children and loved ones. Perhaps a daughter was now the prize of some Hittite. As he trudged across the Transjordan toward Canaan's border, all hopes were dead.⁹

There is very little security in this world, outside of God. There are two ways to learn this lesson: the easy way and the hard way. The easy way is to believe God! God constantly warns us that there is no security in earthly treasures. They can be lost overnight. War may smash our expectations. Everything deteriorates; "moth and rust" can destroy; thieves can break in and steal (Matt 6:19).¹⁰ But if we refuse to listen to God's warnings, then the Lord will teach us the hard way. Amidst this historical account, we see an important truth that we must not forget: ***God disciplines His children because He loves them and wants the best for them*** (Prov 3:11-12; Heb 12:5-11). For Lot, it meant the loss of his family and everything he owned, not to mention his Christian maturity. Yet, even in this, we must remember that God's discipline is always based upon His love. He longs to give us what we need most and that is fellowship with Him.

[Now we come to the first of two principles that will enable us to be people of courage and conviction.]

1. Pursue your sinning brother (14:13-16). In 14:13, Moses writes, "**Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew.**¹¹ **Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram.**" In this section and many others the Bible teaches, "***There is no rest for the righteous.***" Here we come upon another challenge to God's faithfulness and Abram's faith. So far Abram had to contend with several barriers to God's fulfilling His promises to him. His wife was barren; he had to leave the land; his life was in danger; and his anticipated heir, Lot, showed no interest in the Promised Land. Now he finds himself on the verge of becoming involved in a war with four powerful kings in order to save his nephew Lot.¹²

Think about this for a moment. Abram could have chosen to do nothing. He could have given at least four good reasons to ignore Lot's dilemma:

- 1) "Lot got himself into this mess, let him get himself out."
- 2) "Lot took advantage of me! He dishonored me! This is God's discipline!"
- 3) "Even if I wanted to save Lot, it would be a suicide mission against such an army! People would get hurt if I got involved."¹³
- 4) "What if something happens to me?" Lot is expendable but I am the one indispensable man.

Abram could have also used excuses like: "I'm a farmer, not a fighter" or "God has not called me to be a soldier but a saint." In spite of all of these seemingly legitimate responses, Abram chose to take action. In our day and age, this is rare. We live in a culture that hesitates getting involved with others. We complain about the problems of AIDS, pornography, drugs and alcohol, and so on, but we seldom get involved to make a difference. The same is true in the church. We walk away from our own wounded. We ignore those who fail. We let brothers and sisters struggle alone in the darkness.¹⁴

In 14:14-16, Abram shows generosity and grace to a believer that has badly mistreated him.¹⁵ "**When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his**

house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people.”

These three verses demonstrate that Abram didn't live in a monastery or an ivory tower. He had 318 men that he had trained for war. Abram is anything but a nomadic shepherd who passes time counting sheep and stars. He is a powerful individual with a substantial number of troops on call. And for Lot's sake, Abram was willing to go to war, but only at the right time and in the right way.¹⁶ There are times when war is sanctioned and blessed by God (cf. 14:19-20).

This serves as a great reminder that the Christian life is not a bed of roses. Truly, *“there is no rest for the righteous.”* Jesus Himself said that a relationship with Him often brings a sword...not the peace and tranquility we would like. We may have peace within, peace with God, but there is no promise of soft or easy living. The Christian life is not a cushy life.

Abram faced a vast, unstoppable military force of four kings with only 318 men. But with God, that was all he needed! God is able to give a trusting and obedient minority victory over ungodly forces that are overwhelmingly superior in numbers.¹⁷ Here's the lesson: Zechariah 4:6, “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” It's a lesson that God taught Moses when God used him to deliver His people from Egypt. It's a lesson that God taught Joshua and the people of Israel when they advanced into the Promised Land—a land filled with giants! It's a lesson that God taught Gideon when he faced the armies of the Midianites and Amalakitites with only 300 men (Jdg 7:6; 8:10). And David, taking 400 men and chasing the Amalekites who had taken his two wives among their prisoners (1 Sam 30:10). Your problems are always smaller than God! He is able to be victorious in your life over any obstacle you face.

In 14:14, Moses writes that Abram **“went in pursuit as far as Dan.”** Abram is dwelling in the hill country south of Jerusalem. Lot is dwelling in the cities of the plain, south of the Dead Sea. Now remember, Dan is in the distant north of Jerusalem. That means they've gone as far north as you can go in Israel today. Remember the expression, “from Dan to Beersheba” (Jdg 20:1; 2 Sam 24:2, 15)? Well that expression tells us how far north and how far south Israel extended in those days. Beersheba is close to where Abram is dwelling. Dan is as distant as it can get, but Abraham is off to the rescue. He traveled over 240 miles, one-way, to rescue Lot.¹⁸ He chases Chedorlaomer and the others all the way to Dan in the north. This is what I call “kicking tail and taking names.”¹⁹

Abram was a man of faith but he was also a prudent man. He divided his men and attacked at night (14:15). The march of Abram and his tiny band is one of the most remarkable forced marches in history. They traveled the whole length of the Jordan River and launched a counter attack as the enemy indulged in a time of carousing and reveling in celebration of their victory. He routed them and pursued them as far as Hobah (250 miles north of Damascus). Amazing!

How did Abram defeat these armies? It was his faith. He believed God's Word—that the land would go to His descendants—and therefore knew that God was with him. Even if he met defeat, he knew that God would keep His promise.²⁰ Do you have this kind of faith?

In this moment, Abram reflected Christ. Jesus did not sit idly by in heaven waiting for us to deserve redemption. Neither was our redemption painless. Christ left the glories of heaven to come after us.

Abram recovered what had been lost (14:16): Lot and his possessions, the women, and the other people. Everything was recovered: the possessions, the people, and the prodigal Lot. Unfortunately, Lot fails to respond to this spiritual crisis in his life. Instead of turning from the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah and returning to God, he heads home to the city of Sodom. In Genesis 19, we find that Lot, for a second time, will lose everything he has as God judges the wickedness of these sinful cities.

When is it appropriate to rescue foolish relatives like Abram did? Ask yourself three questions:

- 1) Will the foolishness my relatives have gotten themselves into permanently damage or destroy them? If the answer is yes, then it is appropriate to bail them out. Nothing of value is ever achieved if people are destroyed.
- 2) Will my foolish relatives likely learn from their folly? If the answer is “yes,” as long as the answer is “no” to question one, then perhaps they’re best served by retracing their steps, the steps that led them to their foolishness, and working themselves out of a jam.
- 3) Would God rescue me from my foolishness? God responds to us much the same way we should respond to these questions. If Abram had not rescued Lot, Lot would have died. If God had not rescued us, we would have died in our trespasses and sins. So if you are thankful to God today for rescuing you, undeserving as you were, shouldn’t thankful people rescue others, even if they are not deserving?²¹

As a result of his victory, Abram became a household name from the Euphrates to the Nile. An authentic hero! But here lay a further testing—the test of success. So often those who have been stellar in adversity are derailed by success. Their behavior changes in order to take advantage of their fame. Faith in God reverts to faith in self. They begin to believe the good press. And so weakened, they succumb to temptation they had easily resisted before. How would Abram fare?

[In 14:17-24, we find a second principle that will enable us to be people of courage and conviction.]

2. Trust the Lord to meet your needs (14:17-24). Moses writes, “**Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh²² (that is, the King’s Valley).**” The king of Sodom came out to meet Abram. Abram had fought his great battle, not on behalf of the king of Sodom, but for the sake of Lot and his family. Nevertheless, his victory also benefited the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. So a special welcoming committee was appointed, headed by the king himself, to confer upon Abram the usual reward for a conquering hero. His reception must have been the ancient version of a New York City ticker tape parade! There are few temptations as powerful, yet subtle, as praise! Proverbs 27:21: “The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but man is tested by the praise he receives.” How do you handle praise from men?

At the close of chapter 13, Lot anticipates future prosperity in Sodom, while Abram was content to worship and live in Hebron (13:18). But Lot’s selfish decision gains him a prize soon lost; while Abram’s response places him in a position of honor among the kings of the plain (14:17-24).²³ How the tables can turn! When we are faithful to God, He always finds a way to bless us. It may not seem that you are a recipient for blessing, but God is no man’s debtor.

In 14:18, yet another king appears: “**And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.**” Who was Melchizedek?²⁴ “**Melchizedek**” was probably a title rather than a proper name. It means “King of Righteousness.” Melchizedek was a Canaanite, but he is

called a **“priest of God Most High.”**²⁵ In addition to his office of priest, he also is described as the king of Salem, apparently a reference to the shortened name for Jerusalem (Ps 76:2), which at that time was occupied by the Canaanites.²⁶ This Gentile comes forward to pay homage to Abram. He brings with him bread and wine as he goes out to meet Abram on his return from the amazing victory.

In 14:19, Melchizedek blessed Abram and said, **“Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”** Melchizedek did not credit General Abram with a strategic battle plan. He acknowledges God’s work. He made it clear that we may pursue and we may fight, but God gives the victory (cf. Ps 33:16-19; 44:3).²⁷ This is a most unexpected turn of events, for out of the grossly pagan world of the Canaanites emerges not only one who shares belief and worship in the same God as the Semitic Abram but one who pronounces the blessing on the patriarch whom God had already blessed. Abram also acknowledges the priestly dignity of this Canaanite priest-king by giving him a tithe.²⁸

This is a perfect picture of how Jesus comes to our aid and rescue when we need Him. After periods of conflict and testing, Jesus Himself has a habit of coming to visit us. He brings encouragement. Jesus is our sympathetic High Priest in a unique order; there is no one like Him.²⁹

After Melchizedek spoke these words, Abram gave him a tenth of all his bounty. What made Abram tithe? It was not the Mosaic law. It did not yet exist. The Spirit was leading Abram. When the Spirit leads us we shall fulfill the law even if it does not exist! The Christian will tithe, and more than tithe, if he is led by the Spirit.³⁰ This is an emphasis upon “firstfruits.” Abram gave his best—first to the Lord. The tithe is not a debt paid to God. Rather, it is a tangible acknowledgment that everything we have belongs to God. In the Old Testament, the tithe was an obligation before God. In the New Testament, the obligation of tithing has been swallowed up in the privilege and joy of being a faithful steward of God’s resources (2 Cor 9:7-8). My understanding of the Bible, when it comes to tithing, is that 10% is the bare bones minimum.³¹

The conquering of the four kings and their armies was only the first of two battles Abram would have to fight in this chapter. His next enemy, the king of Sodom, would be much more subtle in his attack on the authority of God. Often, the most dangerous time in the Christian life is right after some great victory of faith. Understanding the potential weakness of Abram’s strength, God arranged for Melchizedek to meet Abram and prepare him for his encounter with the king of Sodom.³²

The story concludes with Abram conversing with the king of Sodom (14:22-24) who insists that Abram take the war spoils.³³ One king already enriched him (12:10-20). He does not want that to happen again.³⁴ He doesn’t want any man to be able to say, “I made Abram rich.” So he responds with these powerful words: **“I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, 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.’ 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.”**³⁵ This passage concludes with Abram confessing God before men. He says, **“I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth...”** (14:22). This is the first example of what we now see in the sports world today, on national TV. Abe “gives it up” for the Lord in a public venue. He believes that God is capable of meeting his needs. He bases this on the fact that God is the **“possessor of heaven and earth.”** And since God owns “the cattle on a thousand hills” (Ps 50:10), Abram at that moment was able to trust God for his future needs.³⁶

Our ultimate source of blessing is God. Confidence that God will preserve and provide for His own, as He has promised, should encourage believers to decline worldly benefits and wait for God’s blessings.

That's easy to say, but difficult to live. I tend to rely on my own abilities as my source. I tend to turn to others for help when life is tough. But living the life of faith is trusting God alone as our source.³⁷

Although God led Abram to refuse any reward for his efforts, Abram did not force his personal convictions on his allies. They were entitled to the spoil. Do not judge others when it comes to disputable matters (cf. Rom 14:5-6). Abram doesn't impose morality on his men. Again, he trusts the Lord to work as He sees fit in the lives of these men.

My family and I recently became the proud owners of a dog. His name is Jerome and he is a basset hound mix. Jerome absolutely loves us. Whenever he sees any of us he wags his tail and jumps up all over us. He follows us wherever we go. It seems that his affection is true and deep. However, Jerome has this little problem: he loves to break his leash and run away from us. Several times now we have had an "all points bulletin" (APB) throughout our neighborhood trying to corral Jerome.

Here's what we have learned: The true test of real love takes place when Jerome has the opportunity to go out on his own and yet remains happily within earshot of us. The goal is for our family to become the be-all and end-all of Jerome's life.

The real test of our Christianity isn't seen in our work or words. It's found in this: When we have an opportunity to wander away, to disobey, to leave God's presence, do we choose instead to stay close to Him, to abide in Christ, and to obey? Is your love for Christ seen in your obedience and utter loyalty to Him and to Him alone?³⁸

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Notes

¹ John Ortberg, *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 47. Study source: Chris Peterson, "Optimism and By-pass Surgery," in *Learned Helplessness: A Theory for the Age of Personal Control* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993).

² Preaching Today Citation: Charles Paul Conn in "Making It Happen." *Christianity Today*, Vol. 35, no. 1.

³ Preaching Today Citation: Martin Luther King, Jr. *Leadership*, Vol. 16, no. 3.

⁴ Shinar is the name of a district of Babylonia. It's mentioned exclusively in the Bible. The plain of Shinar comprised the region approximately from modern Baghdad all the way south to the Persian Gulf. In the ancient world this region was called Sumer in the south and Akkad in the North. Later it became known as Babylonia. The renowned cities of Arak and Akkad and Babel, or Babylonia, are all part of Shinar. In Gen 11:2, Shinar is mentioned in connection with the Tower of Babel. Shinar's identification with the district or region of Babylon becomes very clear in Israel's exile (cf. Dan 1; Zech 5:11).

⁵ What immediately strikes the reader in this account of the conquest of Canaan by the four kings is that very little information is given about the actual battles while the account is over laden with geographical and political details. The author is apparently more interested in the geographical extent of the warfare than in the actual course of the battles. What emerges as certain, from this feature of the narrative, is that the events recounted were global in scope and ended in the disgraceful defeat of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. The kings were completely routed (Gen 14:10-11).

⁶ The territory mentioned here is quite extensive, covering from the north and west of the Sea of Galilee, down the Jordan Valley, all the way south to the Red Sea.

⁷ To this day clumps of tar and asphalt wash up on the southern shores of the Dead Sea.

⁸ These open pits of asphalt would be covered over by the desert sand as the wind blew across them and they would appear like the surrounding ground. Anyone who was unfortunate enough to fall into one of these tar pits would be forever entombed.

⁹ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 207.

¹⁰ Michael Eaton, *Preaching Through the Bible: Genesis 12-23* (Kent, England: Sovereign World, 1999), 47.

¹¹ This is the first mention of the word "Hebrew" in the Bible.

¹² See Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Genesis* (<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/genesis.pdf>, 2004), 131.

¹³ Abram set himself up as the target for retaliation. Almost everyone in the ancient Near East practiced retaliation, and it is still a major factor in the continuing political turmoil that characterizes the Middle East to this day. People did not forgive and forget; they harbored resentment for acts committed against their ancestors or themselves for generations and took revenge when they thought they could succeed. Constable, *Notes on Genesis*, 131.

¹⁴ Ed Dobson, *Abraham: The Lord Will Provide* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1993), 54.

¹⁵ Some of these thoughts come from Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing*, 208 and Eaton, *Genesis 12-23*, 48.

¹⁶ John Phillips, *Exploring Genesis* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1992), 124.

¹⁷ Perhaps this story about the retrieval of Lot and the success of Abram anticipates the degree of success God pictures for his people Israel, even though they too will be a minority.

¹⁸ Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

¹⁹ Abram demonstrates excellent leadership qualities: First, he acts decisively when action is called for (14:13-14a: "when"). Second, he leads by example and gets personally involved in the situation when appropriate (14:14b: "led" and "went in pursuit"). Third, he develops and implements a winning strategy (14:15-16: "divided his forces" and attacks "by night"). See Barry C. Davis, *Genesis* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Biblical Seminary unpublished class Notes, 2003), 34.

²⁰ Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing*, 209.

²¹ Woodrow Kroll, "Bailing Out Foolish Family Members," *Back to the Bible Broadcast* March 4, 2004 <http://www.backtothebible.org/radio/today/24615> (5/18/05).

²² The "valley of Shaveh" was near Jerusalem (the Salem of 14:18). It may have been the Kidron Valley immediately east of the city or some other valley not far away. Constable, *Notes on Genesis*, 132.

²³ Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 75.

²⁴ Within Scripture, Melchizedek appears only in the following locations: Gen 14:18-20; Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6-10; 6:19-7:25.

²⁵ What is intended, of course, is that the biblical record does not mention Melchizedek's parents, his ancestry, his birth or his death. In that sense he was different from any other individual found in the biblical narrative. This fact uniquely fits him to be a type of Christ. As such, he functions as a symbol of eternity. His unique priesthood offers a picture of the eternal and universal priesthood of Jesus Christ. This explains how the Messiah could come from the promise line of Abram and eventually from the tribe of Judah and could also be a priest as well as a prophet and a king. Messiah could not come from two tribes at once, both from Judah (as king) and from Levi (as priest). But he solved the dilemma by becoming a priest "not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry [that is, a legal requirement concerning bodily descent] but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life" (Heb 7:16).

²⁶ If Melchizedek is the pre-incarnate Christ there are a couple of things we have to wrestle with. First, Heb 7:3 says Melchizedek is made like the Son of God. That is, he is very Christlike in character, but it doesn't say he is Christ himself. He's like Christ. And also in Heb 7:15, it says that Christ's priesthood is after the "likeness" of Melchizedek. His priesthood was *like* Melchizedek's priesthood, *not* that he *was* Melchizedek.

²⁷ Davis writes, "The character of Melchizedek seems to raise more questions than are answered by Scripture. Apart from the questions of his origins, there are numerous other important questions about Melchizedek that go unanswered: How did he come to a knowledge of the true God? How did he become a priest of the true God? Why was he near the battlefield when Abram completed his fighting, i.e., what was Melchizedek's relationship to the battle (he does not appear to have been one of the captured kings) and what was his connection to the king of Sodom?" Davis, *Genesis*, 35.

²⁸ Kaiser observes, "This situation is very similar to that of Jethro in Exodus 18. He too was a priest who worshiped the same God Moses did, yet he too was a Gentile Midianite (Ex 2:16; 3:1; 18:12). Evidently God was also calling out a people for his own name from among the Gentiles even though the text rarely pauses in its pursuit of the promise-plan of God through the Hebrew people to reflect on this phenomenon." Walter C. Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997 [1996]), Electronic ed.

²⁹ Eaton, *Genesis 12-23*, 50.

³⁰ Eaton, *Genesis 12-23*, 51.

³¹ See Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2003) or *The Treasure Principle* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2001).

³² Elmer Towns, *History Makers of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1989), 87.

³³ By all rights the spoils belonged to Abram. In a way it was poetic justice. Lot had chosen Sodom for its promise of material blessings, but in doing so had selfishly dishonored Abram. And now God was giving it back to Abram to whom it should have belonged in the first place. How tempting this must have been for Abram. Yet, he accepted nothing belonging to him, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal. Abram was jealous for the glory of God (cf. Isa 42:8). He refused to be indebted to him.

³⁴ Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), Electronic Ed.

³⁵ The attitudes of Melchizedek and the king of Sodom are deliberately contrasted. They exemplify the two kinds of reaction to Abram predicted in Gen 12:3. Melchizedek is one of those who bless Abram, whereas the king of Sodom clearly disdains him. Consequently, Melchizedek could expect to be blessed by God, whereas the king of Sodom could look for a curse. Already (cf. 13:13) the fate of the city of Sodom (19:1-38) is being hinted at. D.A. Carson, et al., *The New Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), Electronic Ed.

³⁶ Gene A. Getz, *Abraham: Trials and Triumphs* (Glendale, CA: Regal, 1976), 67.

³⁷ Dobson, *Abraham: The Lord Will Provide*, 65.

³⁸ David Jeremiah, *Turning Point Daily Devotional*, 5-5-05.