Battle and Blessing

(Genesis 14:1-24)

We all face unexpected challenges in life.  How do we make wise decisions?  I believe we need to demonstrate courageous faith in the midst of uncertainty.  When God gives us the victory, we are faced with another challenge.  How do we handle success?  Again, we need to demonstrate courageous faith.

Introduction: I believe a Christian life is an adventure. Life is filled with unexpected events. Things pop up out of nowhere. Are we ready for them? When we are confronted with a big unforeseen issue, we can choose to ignore it, run away from it, or face up to it courageously. A few weeks ago, my aging dad had a major emotional meltdown. What am I going to do? A member received an unexpected job offer out of state. Is this a risky move? Someone out of the blue offered a deal too good to be true. Should we jump on board? This morning, we will learn from Abram, who is called the father of faith; how did he deal with crisis and how did he deal with an offer too good to be true. In order for us to grow to maturity, we need to learn to deal with challenges. We need to learn courageous faith. We will see this in the life of Abram. In the first half of our passage this morning, we will see a demonstration of courageous faith. In the second half of our passage, we will see a temptation in the midst of courageous faith. In the first section, we will see Abram, the watcher, and Abram, the warrior. Please take outline out from the bulletin and following along.

1. Demonstration of Courageous Faith (Gen. 14:1-16)
2. Abram, the Watcher (14:1-12)

Context: As you recall in Genesis 12, God promised Abram that he would have a great nation. Abram stepped out in courageous faith in obedience to God leaving his secure community without knowing exactly where he was going. Last week, Stanley pointed out that there were quarrels between Abram’s herdsmen and Lot’s herdsmen. Abram thought its best for them to go their separate ways. Abram out of his generosity gave Lot first choice as to where to reside. Lot chose the well watered fertile plain of Jordan, where he pitched his tents near Sodom.

Now, fast forward, we come to Genesis 14, where a war broke out between two groups of alliances. This big scrimmage took place near the border of the land promised to Abram. This was an unexpected surprise, but Abram was watchful and prepared. [ In this section, Abram was described as the watcher, he was watching the villains and the victim. ]

1. The Villains (14:1-11)
2. The rebellion (14:1-11):

Verses 1-11 records the first war mentioned in the Bible. These two coalitions consisted of five cities in the plain of Jordan, which has been subjected to kings of four eastern cities for twelve years. These five cities did not want to be under the rule of these Eastern kings anymore. As a result, in the 13th year, they revolted against them and started a rebellion. They probably stopped paying taxes.

1. The retaliation (14:5-11):

The rebellion was followed by retaliation. On the 14th year, the four powerful Eastern kings invaded the Jordan Valley near the Salt Sea to bring the five kings under subjection. They first conquered the border cities before finally taking Sodom and Gomorrah.

You would think the five kings ought to be able to defeat the four kings, since they were fighting in their own familiar environment. However, the five kings were severely defeated. In verse 10, it says that the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into bitumen pits, and the rest fled to the hill country.” They were humiliated as their army ran for their life. [ In verse 11-12, it says, “So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. They also took Lot, the son of Abram’s brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.” ]

1. The Victim (14:12)

One of these five cities that were defeated was Sodom, where Lot, Abram’s nephew, resided. In Genesis 13:10-13, it shows that Lot had first looked at Sodom and pitched his tent near Sodom. Note the change between Genesis 13 and 14; now according to (14:12), Lot was dwelling in Sodom. Lot was initially attracted by the fertile plain, where there were great opportunities to succeed. Now, he was immersed in it.

Although Lot was described as a righteous man in 2 Peter 2:6-8, but he embraced the culture at Sodom. Ironically, throughout Scripture, Lot never built an altar nor was there a record that states that he sought the Lord like his uncle, Abram. Instead of being in the world, he was of the world. In James 4:4, it describes Lot as the friend of the world. Instead of influencing the world, Lot allowed the world to influence him. It was a slow gradual process.

ILLUSTRATION: Are we influencing the world or is the world influencing us? Do our classmates or our coworkers know that we are Christians? Are our values shining bright in the midst of this dark world? Are we cheating in school like many of the students are? Are we spending extra time on breaks like our coworkers? May we not compromise and tolerate sin.

Lot lost all of his possessions, which include his home, his property, his livestock and his money. All of his wealth that he had accumulated was all gone. One day, he had everything and the next day, all was gone. The invaders came and took all the goods in the city of Sodom. This reminds me of Paul’s teaching in 1 Timothy 6:17, “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” Too often, our goal in life is to be wealthy. We should not measure our worth by our net worth, but to base our worth on how God sees us. Not only did Lot lose everything, but he himself had become a prison of war and a slave.

Lot’s capture was God’s way of disciplining him and reminding him that he had no business dwelling in Sodom. Outwardly, this land was described in 13:10 like the garden of the Lord and the land of Egypt; it was a well-watered land. However inwardly, in 13:13, the people living in Sodom and Gomorrah were described as wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord. Apostle Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:33, “Bad company corrupts character.” Someone said, “We are like the people that we spend the most time with.” Therefore, may we choose carefully who we associate with. God had to get Lot’s attention that he is going down the wrong path. [We have seen the demonstration of courageous faith in Abram the watcher and now the demonstration of courageous faith in Abram the warrior. First, let’s look at Abram’s army. ]

1. Abram, the Warrior (14:13-16)
2. Abram’s army (14:13-16)

God’s sovereignty is displayed in v.13. Someone escaped from the battle and he reported what had happened to Lot and his countrymen to Abram. This fugitive chose to go to Abram instead of someone else probably because Abram could offer the greatest hope to rescue them. Abram was sought in the moment of crisis.

ILLUSTRATION: If there is a crisis, would people seek you out? One of the most respected and wise person that I know is Paul Chung. When someone has a problem, many will call up Paul for advice because they know Paul can help them out. Abram was known for his courage and faith in God. People sought him out for help.

Abram considered Lot like his own son because Abram had raised him since he was a child. Once Abram heard that his nephew was in trouble, he immediately assembled his army. Instead of Abram being jealous because his nephew was greedy and selfish, he was loyal and faithful to Lot. Abram could have said, “He took the best land. He needs to defend himself.” Instead, Abram responded courageously and compassionately.

Jesus like Abram was mistreated, yet He like Abram rescued others. Jesus rescued us from our sin by sacrificing Himself on our behalf by dying the most excruciating death. Jesus knew that we could not save ourselves. He loved us so much that He offered Himself to pay the penalty of our sin. Three days later, He rose from the death as a demonstration of God’s acceptance of His payment.

Abram anticipated danger as he entered Canaan. He was prepared for crisis. He had trained 318 men to fight. He allied with Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner as recorded in v.13. Although Abram was outnumbered as he faced the army of four kings, Abram believed that God would fight for him. The odds were against Abram, but he stepped out courageously and putting his faith in God. Abram did not do it alone.

APPLICATION: May we be prepared for crisis. May we not try to deal with it by ourselves. But instead, may we ally with other believers for support. We are not to stand in the island by ourselves, but to join hands together with other believers for mutual protection. One of the best ways of doing this is joining a small group. If you are not in a small group yet, I encourage you to go to the welcome booth in the lobby, and someone will guide you to an appropriate group, where you will receive support, encouragement, prayer, and accountability.

[ We have talked about Abram’s army. Let’s take a look at Abram’s attack, what was his strategy? How did he overcome his enemies? ]

1. Abram’s attack (14:15)

Abram divided his men into several groups and instructed them to attack by night from several vantage points. This strategy could cause the enemy to think that there was a huge force surrounding them. In addition, he attacked at an unexpected time in the evening. It caught the enemy off guard. They were confused as they fled. Abram, the courageous leader, led the charge. He not only chased the enemy away, but pursued the enemies to Hobah, which is 100 miles north of Dan. He made sure that he had complete victory and rescued all those enslaved. He not only rescued Lot, but all those that were enslaved and repossessed all of their possessions. Abram could have kept everything for himself, but unselfishly, he returned everything to the people. Remember who these people are; they are the residents of Sodom, who were described as wicked and evil people. Abram had compassion for those immoral people also. He freed them all and returned all of their possessions.

Just as God had compassion and mercy toward us, we are to demonstrate compassion and mercy toward others that are not like us. APPLICATION: Next Sunday, we are partnering with 1000 Hills to serve the homeless by offering them physical food and spiritual food through a worship service. You can sign up with the link in the announcement. [ We have looked at Abram’s army, Abram’s attack, and now Abram’s achievements as recorded in v.16. “Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.”]

1. Abram’s achievements (14:16)

Abram had a tremendous victory as he and his men drove the four kings away and rescued Lot and all the captives. Although Abram here is acknowledged as the warrior, we see in verse 20 that Melchizedek attributed the victory to God as part of God’s blessing on the patriarch. Let’s read v.20, “and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand! And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.” God was actively working through the life of Abram to carry out His promise of a great nation.

Abram has shown tremendous courage and faith in God in spite of impossible odds. He has won an impossible victory. Now recognition and honor will be given to him. How will he respond?

[As Abram was marching back from a tremendous victory over the four kings, Abram met up with two kings. The first king mentioned is the King of Salem named Melchizedek and the second king mentioned was King of Sodom named Bera. First, let us look at the godly and priestly king of Salem as we read vv. 17-20, “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 Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.” We have seen Abram being described as a Watcher, then a Warrior, and now as a Worshipper. ]

One of the most vulnerable places that one can be is right after a big victory. We have our guard down. In the second half of this passage from 17-24, we see temptation in the midst of courageous faith. In these next eight verses, we see how strong Abram embraced God. Abram was recognized as a worshipper. Who would he bow down to? [ Let us look specifically at what happened to Abram’s encounter with these two kings. First, let look at Abraham, the worshipper, with the godly and priestly king of Salem. Who is Melchizedek? What did Melchizedek do? How did Abram respond? ]

1. Temptation in the Midst of Courageous Faith (Gen. 14:17-24)
2. Abraham, the Worshipper (14:17-24)
3. The godly and priestly king of Salem (14:17-20):
4. Who is Melchizedek?

As Abram was returning from battle, a king came out to meet him. He served the same God that Abram did, the God Most High. His name was Melchizedek, who is described as King of Salem and also a priest of God Most High, possessor of the heaven and earth. He was a historical figure, a Canaanite king & priest living during Abram’s time. He was a worshiper of the one true creator God, who is the Supreme Being over everything.

In the book of Genesis, everybody has a genealogy, except Melchizedek. He is presented as one that doesn’t have any father or mother. He’s presented as if he’s like an eternal person. It makes him to be a model or pattern of the coming Messiah, who would be both king and priest. Because Jesus will live forever, he is able to save completely those who come to God through Him. Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant. Melchizedek appears to transcend earthly existence. This makes him a type of Christ. Unlike other priests, Jesus does not need to offer sacrifice day after day. He sacrificed his life for us once for all.

Christ is the eternal mediator between God and man. He will return to the same city where Melchizedek was from, Jerusalem. Melchizedek is a proto-type of the true king of righteousness and peace. Melchizedek is an Old Testament illustration of what Jesus Christ would be.

Genesis provides context for Melchizedek’s identity. Psalm 110 connects Melchizedek to the Messiah. Hebrews 5,6,7 describe Jesus’ supremacy as the great high priest using Melchizedek’s role as an illustration of Jesus’ priesthood and kingship.

1. What did Melchizedek do?

Melchizedek, the king priest, offered bread and wine to Abram, both of which were used in remembrance of Christ. Jesus, like the priesthood of Melchizedek, renews the spiritual strength of his people with the bread and wine of communion so that we can live in spiritual victory. The author of Hebrews said that Jesus is the priest and a king in the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek first brings a great feast out to Abram and then he gives God’s blessing to Abram. He reminded Abram that it was God who is the one who gave him this victory over his enemies. Yes, Abram and his men demonstrated courage in fighting, but it was his courageous faith in God that resulted in the victory. The odds are too great humanly speaking to win. It could not have happened unless God stepped in. Melchizedek prayed and blessed Abram in the name of the Most High God. Remember, the lesser is blessed by the greater. Although Abram was the father of Israel, he was inferior to Melchizedek because Melchizedek blessed Abraham.

1. How did Abram respond?

We can all see how great Melchizedek was; even the patriarch Abram gave him a tenth of the plunder. Abraham acknowledged his submission to Melchizedek and expressed his gratitude by giving him a tithe. Notice that he did not tithe to get a blessing. He tithed out of thankfulness for the blessing he received. Later, we see the Israelites following Abram’s example by honoring the priests who work in the temple by giving them a tithe.

APPLICATION: Giving is an act of worship. God does not need our money. He desires our heart. In Mt. 6:21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Our treasure follows what we are passionate about. The Bible says that we can find out what is most precious to us by identifying where we invest our money. For some of us, it might be electronics or clothes or the latest gadget. However, for Abram, he invested in eternity. Job 1:21 says, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart.” Whatever we have, we will not be able to take it with us. Therefore, it is wise to invest in eternity. When we tithe, we acknowledge that God owns everything and we give to express our gratitude toward God’s generosity to us. If you are not tithing, I encourage you to start tithing. If you are already tithing, I encourage you to give more generously. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [ We have looked at Abram, the worshipper as he worship the godly and priestly king of Salem. Now we will see how Abram deal with the godless and perverted king of Sodom. Here we will see how Abram deal with temptation in the midst of courageous faith. ]

1. The godless and perverted king of Sodom (14:21-24): In stark contrast, Abram refuses to have any fellowship with Bera, king of wicked Sodom.
2. Who is Bera?

Bera is the king of Sodom. Note that his people were taken captive and Abram has rescued them. It is very interesting what Bera offered. Let read v. 21, “And the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.”

1. What did Bera offer?

This is a test of Abram’s faith after a great victory. Bera offered an attractive proposition. Bera offered Abram to keep all the spoils. Bera wanted to keep the people. Definitely, this deal was tempting. There were a lot of spoils, possessions, and live stocks. Abram could be filthy rich. [How did Abram respond? Let’s read vv. 22-24, “But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share.”]

1. How did Abram respond?

Abram could have thought that this was a way God is blessing him with the victory. But the King of Sodom was obviously a godless and perverted king. Abram discerned that it was unwise to deal with such a wicked person. The question comes down to who would Abram bow down to worship. Through Abram’s courageous faith, he turned down Bera’s tempting offer.

Abram had to choose between two kings who represented two opposite ways of life. In order to make the right decision, he needs courageous faith. In the midst of courageous faith, there will be temptation: testing of our faith whether to compromise or not. Bera represented the appeal to the flesh. Do not be deceived that money and possession will give us permanent fulfillment. Bera, the King of Sodom. Sodom means “burning.” If we choose to bow down to Bera, everything we live for can burn up. That is what happened to Lot. However, Abram through courageous faith bowed down to worship God most high with Melchizedek, who is a type of Christ, the King-Priest. He will enable us to enjoy righteousness and peace. Abram rejected Bera and accepted Melchizedek.

In the midst of unexpected challenges, may we courageously put our faith in God. As we seek His will, He will direct us. May we be courageous and take risk for Him.