

## The Rescuer Rescues - Genesis 14:1-16

Chapter 14 of Genesis records the account of the rescue of Lot by his uncle Abram. As we saw last Sunday, after Abram and Lot separate, Lot ended up in the land of Zoar in the Siddim Valley, which is the southern part of the Jordan Valley. If you recall, we are told in Chapter 13 that he moved his tent close to the city of Sodom. And Moses reminds us in chapter 13 of the wickedness of the Sodomites. We also saw last week that Lot chose to walk by sight, he chose what was pleasing to the eyes, rather than choosing by faith in the one true God. The land he chose may have been agriculturally rich and bountiful, but it was spiritually barren. And in today's passage, we are going to see the consequences of Lot's poor choice begin to unfold. It is important to note, however, that just because Lot made this poor choice, it did not mean that he was *not* a righteous man, i.e., saved, i.e., a Christian. The best we can discern from Scripture, Lot was a child of God just as Abram was. God extended His mercy and grace to Lot, and we witness this in God's rescuing of Lot in our passage this morning and in Chapter 19 of Genesis. But Lot did not have the same office or the same calling as Abram. And what we see here in chapter 14 is that God calls Abram to be a rescuer. Now, Abram is the rescuer in chapter 14, but *Jesus Christ* is the ultimate rescuer in redemptive history. And we will see that God's rescuer rescues his people from captivity.

I was searching about stories of rescue this week and I came across an amazing story that occurred in July of 1976, and is described as a swift display of military precision, courage, and sheer daring, when Israeli commandos rescued 102 Jewish hostages from Uganda, in Central East Africa. Some of you may recall hearing or reading of this since that time. It is considered a popular and fairly well-known story of rescue. To summarize it, the Jewish hostages' plane had been hijacked by Palestinian terrorists and flown to a safe haven at Entebbe airport in Uganda, which was protected by the monstrous madman, dictator Idi Amin, who has been considered one of the most brutal rulers in world history. The goal was to force Israel and four other nations to release fifty-three Palestinian or pro-Palestinian terrorists from jail. The Palestinian terrorists made it clear that if the jailed terrorists were not freed, the 102 Israeli hostages would be killed.

Two days later, Yitzhak Rabin, the prime minister of Israel, Lt. Gen. Mordechai Gur, the military chief of staff, and all the Israeli cabinet members decided they would make an all-out effort to come up with a military option to rescue the hostages. Immediately, a strike force was assembled on a military base in the Israeli desert to begin planning the impossible: a raid on Entebbe to save the hostages.

The strike force was selected, and they were led by the brave and courageous thirty-year-old Col. Jonathan Netanyahu (Net-an-yahoo), who had moved to Israel from the United States when he was only two.

The rescue plan was made and set into motion. It involved a cargo plane flying directly into the airport at Entebbe. The plane was undetected because the airport was not being used. When it landed and came to a stop, its huge tail ramp dropped and out came a large, black Mercedes

Benz limousine, closely followed by two Land Rovers filled with Israeli commandos -- dressed in Palestinian uniforms. In the back of the limousine was a bulky Israeli officer dressed like dictator Idi Amin. As the party drove up to the terminal building, the Ugandan guards snapped to attention, allowing the commander Netanyahu and his Israeli commandos to get within a few yards of the building before the first shots were fired. Bullets were soon raining on the airport. Within twenty minutes, the shooting was over. Fifty-three minutes after the raid began, the hostages were saved!

This story of rescue is much like the account of Abram's rescue of Lot. You see, like the hostages in the account of Amin and Netanyahu, Lot had been taken captive. And like the hostages *and* Lot, God's people are often taken captive by the enemy. We certainly have been taken captive in an ultimate sense by sin, as we saw previously in Genesis 3 with the Fall of man and the curse. But we also are taken captive in an immediate sense by what we discovered last week as that which the Bible calls the "desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes". So, like the hostages in the story, we need a Rescuer. You may have noticed that the Rescuer motif, or theme, appears frequently throughout Scripture. We have already seen it displayed through Noah and the flood. It appears so often in Scripture because it is *essentially* the underlying theme of all of Scripture, the Great Rescue. It is God's rescue of his people from the captivity of the enemy, the enemy of sin and evil.

You see, despite his people being taken captive by the enemy, God has established means to rescue them. And the means God uses to rescue his people from the enemy is a *rescuer*. And what we find throughout Scripture is all of redemptive history points to God's ultimate Rescuer, his final Rescuer, the one who *has* rescued and at his return will consummate his rescue of his people from captivity, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, we, like Lot, like the Israeli hostages, need a rescuer.

But what traits or characteristics identify God's rescuer? I think in this account of Lot's rescue by Abram, we can identify three traits of God's rescuer. You can see them printed there on page six of the worship guide. We see that God's rescuer has the ability to identify the one who needs to be rescued. God's rescuer is loyal. And God's rescuer is victorious.

Look with me at the beginning of chapter 14. Chapter 14 is notable because it is the first mention of warfare between human beings in the Bible. Even though God was working through Abram to bless all nations (12:1-9), strife continued as men continued in their sin. The curse of sin continued to be manifested and continued to grow. The beginning of chapter 14 is an instructive sequel to chapter 13, as we see Lot's prize so quickly lost, but Abram's small resources so effective and his moral stature still further enhanced. Genesis 14 confirms Lot's foolishness in walking by sight instead of living by the same generous faith as his uncle Abram. So verses 1-12 gives us the background of Lot's capture and by the end of this section, the one needing rescue will be identified. Essentially what occurred is this: Five local kings of the five cities of the Valley of Siddim, which you see listed there in verse 2 as Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela; have been vassal cities or servants to Chedorlaomer, the Elamite king, for 12 years. And in the thirteenth year they have formed a coalition with one another

and decided to revolt against Chedorlaomer, their ruler. So Chedorlaomer joins with three other ally kings from the north and begins to respond to the rebellion with punitive raids against, not only the rebellious vassal cities, but various other cities along their route. Chedorlaomer and his army eventually made their way down the King's Highway, a major trade and transportation route in that region, to the Siddim Valley. There they engage in battle with the five local kings and their armies. Of course, the rebellion kings are routed. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, along with the others, flee and we see in verse 10 that some fall into bitumen pits and others flee to the mountains. Then in verse 11 we read that the foreign kings led by Chedorlaomer plundered the defeated cities. Finally, we see in verse 12 that they also took Lot with his possessions and went on their way.

So, Sodom and Gomorrah were sacked. Everything and everyone that could be carried off was. During the conflict between the pagan kings, Lot and all his possessions are captured by Chedorlaomer. But this should not surprise us, as Moses had already hinted back in chapter 13 that Lot's decision to live there was a mistake. Instead of attempting to share the lush region with his uncle or work out a solution where he did not have to part company with God's chosen man, Lot symbolically moves outside the covenant, first settling outside of Sodom and then moving into the wicked city (14:12). And note the progressive identification of Lot with Sodom throughout the narratives of chapter 13 and 14: choosing it, then camping near it, then living in it, and finally a respected citizen in it. It is therefore not surprising that he suffers imprisonment along with the kings and inhabitants of Sodom.

But why is so much emphasis placed upon the details and description of this event? This international incident is not to be understood only in terms of power struggle and economic forces. It was a part of the plan of the sovereign God for the lives of two of His people, Lot and Abram. It was God fulfilling and upholding his promise to Abram.

This narrative sets up the rescue of Lot by the Rescuer, who in this case is Abram.

Verse 12 says, "They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way." This verse provides quite the commentary on the decision of Lot in chapter 13. Lot had chosen to act on the basis of economic self-interest and had thus disregarded the covenant or promise that God had made with Abram (12:1-3). What Lot should have learned is that "he who lives by the sword, also dies by it." All that Lot seemed to have gained by taking advantage of Abram was lost in an instant. He who had been so shrewd was now a slave, and all because of his selfish choice. Lot is now in need of rescue. And much like Lot, we often are led astray and taken captive by making unwise choices, choosing according to the flesh. Our flesh seeks to satisfy its desires and so often leads us to sin. So, we too are in need of rescue. But how will Lot be rescued?

God gives us a picture of the answer in the remaining verses. God is about the business of rescuing his people. Psalm 22:8 says, <sup>8</sup> "He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!" So, insert Abram. God's rescuer in this narrative. Verse 13, "Then

one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies of Abram.”

*Mamre, Eshcol* and *Aner* are disclosed only in this chapter as personal or, more probably, clan-names. They were in ‘covenant’ with Abram. Essentially Abram and these others had some type of friendly agreement to live peacefully with one another and potentially to defend each other.

And also in verse 13, we see that God’s rescuer identifies the one needing rescue. Abram is informed that his nephew Lot has been taken captive by the armies of the northern kings and Abram decides Lot needs to be rescued. Or more accurately God decrees to rescue Lot and places it on Abram’s heart to act accordingly. And isn’t this true for us as well. God identified his people, the ones he created in his image, and determined they needed rescuing. We read about that in Genesis chapter 3 where we saw the Proto-evangelion, where God said that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. We needed rescuing from the captivity of sin and Satan. And who is the ultimate rescuer of God’s people? It is the Savior Jesus Christ.

That is what we read about in Ephesians 2. “We were dead in our trespasses and sins in which we once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and we’re by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” We were held in bondage by our trespasses and sin. We were held captive and we needed rescue.

So we come to verse 14, “when Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive he lead forth his trained men born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.” Dr. John Currid writes this about Abram, “when Abram hears that Lot, his relative, or kinsman, has been kidnapped by foreign armies, he chases them down, overtakes them at Dan and then pursues them to the region of Damascus. What we are witnessing is an act of redemption.” Dr Currid is helping us see that Abram is rescuing or redeeming Lot and part of his motivation is his loyalty to God and to Lot. Loyalty is characteristic of God’s rescuer, but it is also to be a characteristic of Christians in general. Proverbs 18:24 states, “a man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” The Bible commends loyalty. As I was thinking about loyalty and discussing it with my family, the loyalty of Wilbur the pig from Charlotte’s Web came to mind. Actually Gretchen, who is a great admirer of pigs, came up with it.

If you remember, at the end of the book, after Wilbur has won the bronze medal, Charlotte says she will not be returning to the farm because she will die soon; but she has just produced an egg sac that will eventually hatch baby spiders. Wilbur promises to always care for Charlotte’s children. So, Wilbur gathers the egg sac in his mouth and prepares for the ride home. As Wilbur is pushed into his crate, he winks at Charlotte, who whispers goodbye and waves. The next day, Charlotte dies.

What follows is a great display of loyalty by Wilbur toward Charlotte, though she is not there anymore and would not know if Wilbur kept his promise or not. Wilbur returns home with the egg sac. Throughout the winter, he guards and warms it, and in spring, tiny spiders begin crawling out. Three of Charlotte's daughters decide to stay to be Wilbur's friends. Wilbur lives a good, long life, but he never forgets his promise to Charlotte.

Abram is loyal as well, first to God and then to his nephew Lot. Abram does not have to be talked into going to retrieve Lot. Abram is loyal to his mission, his calling, and here he is loyal to those that God calls him to. God calls Abram to redeem his kinsmen.

One writer from *Tabletalk* magazine, a division of R.C. Sproul's Ligonier Ministries, put it this way, "The decisive and courageous warrior at Mamre has done a complete about face from the duplicitous and cowardly husband in Egypt. The man of faith is not shackled by his past failures but saved from them. The man of peace, with reference to his relative, becomes a man of war, with reference to those who plunder him. The scene also contrasts Abram's covenant loyalty to his nephew with his nephew's disloyalty in the preceding scene."

God displays loyalty to his calling of and promise to Abram by causing him to be loyal to Lot. And so it is that our rescuer, Jesus, is loyal as well. Jesus was loyal to his kinsmen, namely his Father and all those that the Father had given him, those who are believers. Abram rescues Lot, his kinsmen, and Jesus rescued the elect, the descendants of Abram, his kinsmen.

But unlike Abram, Jesus was loyal to the point of death. That's how loyal Christ was to the Father's will. Isaiah 53:5-6, "5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Jesus paid for the sins of his people, to secure their rescue. Unlike Abram and unlike any other Rescuer, Christ was *perfectly* loyal to God's covenant. Christ perfectly rescued his people. There was no rescue from sin to be made after Christ. His atonement, his redemption was perfect. How do we know this? How do we know that Jesus' rescue was perfect?

Let's read verses 14-15, "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."

We see, the mighty kings of Ellasar, Goiim, Shinar, and Elam were no match for Abram, a faithful covenant keeper. God was on the side of Abram. So what we see here is that God's rescuer is victorious. In his commentary on Genesis, John Calvin writes, "It ought to be ascribed to the faith of Abram, that with a small band, he dared to assail a numerous army elated with victory. But that he came off conqueror with little trouble, and with intrepidity pursued those who far exceeded him in number, we must ascribe to the favor of God."

Throughout redemptive history, *God* has raised up rescuers to deliver his people from bondage. Time and time again *God* made His rescuers victorious, including Abram here with Lot. *However*, after every rescue, including Abram and Lot, there eventually had to be another rescue. *God's* people continued to slip back into sin. They continued to be held captive by sin. Until Jesus. Jesus was and is the victorious covenant keeper and the Great Rescuer.

And remember who the original audience of this account was, it was the Israelites who were being led out of Egypt and toward the promise land by Moses. *God's* faithfulness to Abram provided evidence to Moses' audience that His promise of victory was trustworthy to those who lovingly served Him. In like fashion, this narrative encourages us in our struggles as well. Today, the Israel of *God* — those who have come to faith in Christ — suffers assaults from the kingdom of darkness. 1 Cor. 15:57 states, "But thanks be to *God*, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." We know we will be ultimately rescued from suffering and sin when Jesus returns (Rev. 19:11–21). Until then, we have a responsibility to look to Christ as our Rescuer and to serve our Rescuer through serving others, prayer, Bible study, evangelism, and ministries of mercy. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, "For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of *God* and take every thought captive to obey Christ."

And so, the Great Rescue has occurred. We celebrated it on Easter, and we celebrate it every Lord's Day. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. As great as the mission at Entebbe was and as great as the hero Netanyahu who ended up dying in the rescue was, it pales in comparison to the greatest rescue in history—the saving of mankind by *God*. Mankind found itself lost in life, held hostage by evil, captive to sin, helpless and hopeless. Jesus risked Himself—even gave His life—to rescue mankind. He is the greatest of all Rescuers, marked with nobility, dignity, and honor. "***Rescue***" resides within the heart of *God*. So let us look to the Lord Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, the great rescuer who rescues. Let us pray.