

The Choice

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 June 2026

Preacher: James Tang

[0:00] We've been going through scripture and we're actually, last week we started on a guy who! Becomes the founding father of the faith almost in Abram. And he is also making choices.

He actually makes the choice to leave his own father's house. And I talked last week about the pain of that. And he goes and he heads towards Canaan and he makes just this brave, brave choice. And he leaves to a place where he doesn't know. God says, you go first and then I'll show you later. How terrifying is that? But yet he goes, filled with faith. That's why righteousness was countered to him. And we see in multiple places in the New Testament, this guy is a righteous man, even though he makes a good choice, followed shortly by a bad choice. He goes to the place where God leads him and suddenly things don't work out because there's enemies there and there's no food there. So he decides, well, you know what, God, I followed you at this point, but I'm going to take the wheel now and I'm going to go my own way. So then he goes to Egypt and from there he makes a bad choice.

I mean, just to say it's a bad choice is an understatement. He actually sacrifices his wife, tells a lie and gives his wife to be in Pharaoh's harem. And then Pharaoh gets him out and says, what did you do? Why did you not tell me the truth?

Interestingly, Abram gets rich by doing this because Pharaoh gives him so much favor because he thinks Sarai is his brother, his sister. And so then he leaves Egypt more rich than when he first came in. And so you see, it's all about choices that we make. And even though we made that choice for God many years ago, it doesn't mean that we're making the choice for God today. And what Christ says is actually every day, every day you decide to take up your cross and you follow me today, every moment of every hour, but that's hard. That's why we need people around us. That's why we need fathers to model that to us. That's why we need fathers to hold us accountable. That's why we need these people to help us make these decisions. And we're going to carry on and look at what the, where the story goes. And it is continually all about choices as well. Um, so we're going to be going through Genesis chapter 13 to 14. So I'm going to be going quite quick, quite quick. Uh, and so please do bear with me, open up your Bibles to Genesis chapter 13 to 14, and we're going to go through, but maybe before that, what I will do is invite you to stand for the word of the Lord.

[2:19] Let me pray again. So God, our heavenly father, our perfect heavenly father who loves us in an unconditional perfect way. We thank you. We thank you for being here this morning.

And we also thank you for this word, whether we've heard this all before, or whether it's all new, Lord, we pray that you would speak to us again.

We thank you for your word. Genesis chapter 13. So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had and lot with him into the Negev. Now, Abram was very rich in livestock in silver and in gold. And he journeyed on from the Negev as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning between Bethel and I, to the place where he had made an altar at the first. And there Abram called upon the name of the Lord. And lot who went with him also had flocks and herds and tents so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. At that time, the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land. Then Abram said to Lot, let there be no strife between you and me and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. It's not the whole land before you. Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right. If you take the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt in the direction of Zoar. This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. So Lot chose for

himself all the Jordan

Valley and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other. Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord. Then the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are northward and southward and eastward and westward. And for all the land that you see, I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you. So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron. And there he built an altar to the Lord. This is the word of the Lord. Please take a seat. So I didn't read chapter 14, mostly because I spared myself the embarrassment of all the names that we're going to go through. So I'm going to leave you to kind of fill those in later. But the story is this. He leaves Egypt, a very rich man. He has a very, very, very awkward car journey home with his wife. Because, you know, sorry about that. Sorry that I gave you up to the king and then you have to stay there for quite a while, whilst I had to live in luxury and get more and more livestock and more and more people under my care. So they go home. They go back to Canaan.

[5 : 18] And this is where we see something interesting happen. Well, let's just follow along. Verse 2, chapter 13. Abram was very rich in livestock and in silver and in gold. And he journeyed and he heads back to Canaan, verse 4, to the place where he had made an altar at the first. So he goes back to Canaan and then he sees the altar that he built first. What an interesting thing that would have happened there. When you make decisions that are not really trusting God, you feel bad about them.

You feel a little bit ashamed and embarrassed about them. And he heads back to the place where he first worshipped God. And he sees this altar. He's like, oh. And then it's interesting. It says, and there Abram called upon the name of the Lord. So he wasn't calling upon the name of the Lord in Egypt because he was trying to take matters into his own hands. He was trying to save his own life. And now he comes back and he remembers that actually God's the one who provides for him every step of the way. He remembers the time when he stood in worship. And from that moment, he actually goes back into worship himself. It's interesting because even though Abram didn't trust God and made decisions according to his own wisdom, yet God still blessed him. Isn't that interesting? Doesn't that remind you that when we are faithless, God is still faithful? And so God still, despite his bad decisions, still keeps blessing him. He must have been, what on earth just happened?

I lied. I gave up my wife and yet somehow God still blessed me. I think that's you and I. I think that's you and I when we constantly make bad decisions about things and yet God somehow still has our back. He still has this net where he keeps caring for us and keeps providing for us. And we wonder, my goodness, God, what did we do to deserve this? And so what's the next appropriate response from there? It is to worship. So he then calls on the name of the Lord and he worships. But then something interesting happens. Even though we make bad decisions and then God has our back, there are still consequences to those bad decisions. All that wealth that he got from Egypt ends up being too much for the land to actually support. So what happens? A family feud. Lot's herdsmen and Abram's herdsmen, they start fighting and arguing because they just have so much, there's nowhere to even put it.

So they're starting to fight over places to put all their blessings, which tells me something else, which is when God gives the blessing, then there will be a place to put it. But when he doesn't, and when we try and get it by our own means, then actually that's when we run into trouble.

[7 : 39] Interestingly, later, you'll have heard of a story about a lady called Hagar that again, Abraham doesn't trust in God's provision and then uses another way. And guess where Hagar is from? Egypt. So you see some of the things that come from the places where we make wrong decisions come back to haunt us. And what we see here is a family feud between Abram and Lot. It's funny because this is a truly a first world problem. They're so rich, they have to fight. And we look at that and go, that is so pathetic. That is such an ancient world thing, is it? Or do we see the rich fighting the rich here? How many times do we see wealthy families fighting in-house about what?

About money. And it's the same thing. And we see it happening right here. What's even more interesting, if I keep going down, at the end of verse seven, at the time, the Canaanites and the

Perizzites were dwelling in the land. The author's kind of just showing us here, hey, so these two rich people were fighting because of the things that they'd gained in a way that they shouldn't have done it. And yet now the people on the outside are looking in going, what are these guys doing? He almost just kind of goes out of his way. And yeah, and other people were watching. The Canaanites were there. The people outside of the house of God, the family of God, they were looking in going, what are these guys doing? And I just stopped there and go, how much of that happens in the church when the family of God fights over the blessings? And then the people on the outside look in and go, oh my goodness. So that's what following God looks like. It looks like hypocrisy.

It looks like greed. It looks like selfishness. Isn't it interesting? Isn't it embarrassing? And yet here is the story. But thankfully, Abram has learned from his time in Egypt. And I think he starts to make some good choices. So from here, he goes to his nephew, which by the way, who lost his father at a young age, and Abram takes him in and takes him away from home. And he says to his nephew, like, hey, okay, it's too much. We are just too rich. Why don't we separate? Why don't you go one way and I go the other way? And you know what? Why don't you choose which way you want to go?

Isn't this interesting? Because if you think about Abram, he is the uncle. He is the senior person in this relationship. He would have had every right to say, look, I'm going to make the decision. I'm going to go this way. And then you go that way. And then we'll figure it out yourself.

[9:54] Right? And yet Abram decides, well, actually in this moment, I'm going to let you choose. Why does Abram do that? I think Abram does it because he realizes that the only one who provides, the only one who can really trust is God. And he doesn't need to trust in his own eyes to see where is a good place to go. So he's like, look, you choose. And then I'll be okay with whatever, because I think I have learned. I'm the same guy that sacrificed my own wife out of fear of Pharaoh.

I have learned my lesson. I'm going to let you choose. Some of us are having fights actually right now with our families. Some of us are having disagreements and conflict with the people that we love.

And we're like, actually, we might even be right. We might be even be entitled to certain things. We might even have the right to make these decisions. And maybe God's telling us, hey, do you trust me or do you trust yourself? Maybe there are things where you can actually take a step and you know what, it's not right, but guess who I trust? I trust in someone much far bigger.

I don't need to fight for this for myself. I know that if God wants me to win this, then he will allow me to win this. And if he doesn't, then hey, it's up to him because I trust him. Maybe there's some of us who need to approach a family conflict and say, you know what? Let me lay aside my ego. Let me lay aside my status. Let me lay aside my right. Let me lay aside the fact that who is wrong or who is right. And let me just say that I trust in God. And so therefore you choose whichever way and I'm still going to be okay. Maybe some of us need to learn a little bit from Abram here. Interestingly, then Lot's like, okay, well, don't mind if I do. And so then he looks, verse 10, and Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered. Let me stop there.

Lot lifted up his eyes and saw. This is the same saw where Eve in Genesis 3 saw the fruit and decided it was good. This is the same saw in Genesis 6, where the sons of men were looking at the daughters of God and saying, I saw, I liked that person. I liked that woman. I want to take that woman for myself. It's this, how often do our eyes get us into trouble? How often do we look at something and deem it good ourselves? We want this ourselves and then therefore we take it.

[12:01] Isn't that what the MTR station adverts are all for? As you walk through the tunnel and you see just advert after advert is you're encouraged to look and see and take and say, you want this.

You don't even know what this is, but you want it and you need it. How often do our eyes get us into trouble here? How often do our own, our own perceived wisdom get us into trouble when we look and see? And so then he says, you know what? I look and I see the valley.

Now that is a good place. Why is it a good place? Lot looked at it and thought, hmm, this reminds me of two places. One, it reminds me of the garden of the Lord, the garden of Eden. Even though he himself wasn't there, he actually was only not that many generations from people like Adam who was actually there. So he would have heard stories about the garden of Eden. He's like, this is paradise. Look at that valley. Look at the waters. Look at the lush green pastures. That's going to be a good place where I continue to grow my wealth. He thinks it reminds him of the garden of

Eden. He thinks it reminds him of paradise. He also thinks it reminds him of Egypt. Because remember, Lot was with Abram in Egypt while he was getting rich, while Sarai was still in Pharaoh's harem. So he would have accumulated lots of wealth and luxury himself. So he's like, that valley reminds me of what the garden of Eden is, I think, I hear. And also just my time in Egypt, the luxury. Man, look at that place.

It looks like the rosewood. It looks like the peninsula. That's where I'm going to grow. That's where I'm going to be comfortable. And so he decides for himself, I'm going to go there.

Interestingly, as you look further, that is where Sodom and Gomorrah is. That's the direction of Sodom and Gomorrah. And what you see here is the slippery slope of sin. He says, I like that place. [13:43] I see it. I think it's going to be good for me. I think it's good for my own luxury. And I'm going to move towards that direction. But first he starts at verse 11. He chose for himself all the Jordan Valley. And then he journeyed east. By the way, if you look at scripture, anytime anyone travels east, it's really not good news. And so what happens here is he heads, settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. It's interesting.

This is the slippery slope of sin. You look at something and you see it and you want it, and then you start moving towards it. And you think, I'm going to be okay. Okay, look, the culture there is bad. Verse 13 says this, now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord. So he's like, look, I can see the people over there are really bad, but the valleys leading up to it are actually really nice. So I'm going to go there and I'm just going to pitch my tent right here around the cities around it. And I'm going to be okay. Have we done that before? Where you look at something, you look at a company, you look at a career, you look at a relationship, you're like, look, okay, that's not right. But you know what? I'm just going to get a little bit closer.

You know, I'm not going to move there. I'm not going to actually stay there and become a citizen of Sodom. I'm just going to head that into that direction because I'm going to be okay. You know what that's called? That's called compromise. That's called you trying to justify in your own heart, in your own flesh, things that you think are going to be good for you. And you're not looking at what God is saying. How many of us have tried that before? You know what? I will.

Okay, look, I'll go out with my friends, but don't worry. I'm not going to drink. You know what? What I'm going to do? I'm just going to be the guy that, you know what? I'll even take my Bible app on my phone. And you know what? You know what all my friends need? My friends just need someone to hold their heads above the toilet when they are, when they are too drunk and they are vomiting. Maybe I'll help them. You know what? You know what? My friends are so bad. They're going to need someone to help them get home because they're going to be so out of shape. They're going to need someone who they can trust to take them home. You know what? So then I will go. How many of us have done that?

[15:33] How many of us had justified our actions to get closer and closer to Solomon and Gomorrah and just insist that we don't. But what you see here, he sees from afar, he heads in the direction, he pitches tents in the nearby cities, but later in chapter 14, you see he's living right in the center of it. You might think that you're okay, but the reality is you're not okay. Many of you know that I turned 40 last or this month still, it feels like a long time ago. The reason why it feels like a long time is because I committed to having only one McDonald's per month. That is my new pledge of health.

But my goodness, is it hard? My eldest, who's now off school, way too early in my opinion, we were having lunch the other day, he's like, I just want McDonald's. I was like, well, you can have McDonald's. Oh my goodness. I was sat next to him having my soup whilst he was eating the hot wings, which I think are the best in the world. And the shake, shake fries, the seaweed shake, shake fries. And I was like, oh Lord. And so I actually had to move myself and sit somewhere else. But how many of us know that we shouldn't? And yeah, we're like, you know what, I'm just cool. I'm just going to hang out and sit next to you. Don't compromise. Don't compromise.

Make good choices, people. So what happens there is he goes, and then we'll hear about him later. Verse 14. But then the Lord said to Abram, okay, you lift up your eyes. And then he shows him the whole land. Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and east, southward and eastward and westward. What he's doing here, he's doing basically what maybe many years before Mufasa does to Simba, where he says, son, look, everything the light touches, everything the light touches belongs to you. It's going to belong to you. How bold a statement is

this? He's saying, everything that you see, everything the light touches and everything that you can lay your eyes on is going to be yours. What's even more interesting is you don't have a kid right now because Sarai is not able to bring you and provide you with this baby. And that's going to hold on a whole nother story later. But soon your offspring will be as the dust of the earth. Can you see the dust particles there? Can you count them? No, that's the point. You can't. You're going to have so many children. You're not even going to be able to count them. Can you, can you imagine how ridiculous that promise is to Abram at that moment? So he's already given Lot the nice place. He now looks and sees all of this and God says, look, I'm going to give you everything and I'll give you all the children you'll ever need. That's faith. That's him then going, okay, God, I can't see it, but I'm going to trust you. And then he keeps going. And then what happens after this, and this is the end of chapter 13. So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord. So again, just God promised him this land. So if I'm, if I'm Abram,

God, you promised me this land. I'm going to set up shop here. I'm going to build, I'm going to build the biggest house here that makes it most comfortable. And yet Abram doesn't. And we talked a little bit about this last week, even though he's in the promised land that God gave him, he still only lives in tent. In Hebrews 11, we see why, that actually, even though he's in the land that God promised him, his eyes are now on something else. He's on, and it's verse six, I think, where his eyes are now on the city that's foundation. There is a foundation whose builder and designer is God. So he's looking beyond that. So that's why, even though he's in the promised land, he still lives in a tent because he says, actually, God, this isn't my end goal. This isn't my end destination. And I referenced my conversation with Caleb last week, where we were talking about what is even home? Vancouver is home because it's beautiful. Or is Hong Kong home because it's convenient and the food until the humidity comes and slaps you in the face every two seconds. But then the truth is neither of them are home. We should live, we should make that choice to live in wherever we are, despite the comforts or lack of comforts, and still just live in tents.

[19:21] Why? Because we know that there's something far greater. There's going to be a combination of Vancouver and Hong Kong. Can you imagine that? And maybe Hawaii too. I've never been, but I've been told it's paradise. But can we cast our eyes on something further? So what does he do again? He builds an altar and then he worships again, even though he's not obtained it, even though he's still living in a tent, he says, God, I worship you. Coincidentally, he goes to Hebron, which ends up being the place where in the future, a little baby is born and that baby ends up being King David.

And so you see the story of how it's unfolding right here. Choices. What are the choices that we are making? We are allowed to use our eyes to see, but only when God tells us to, only when our vision is on what God is asking us to look at. Otherwise we are discerning with our own eyes. We are looking and discerning with our own minds. If you go all the way back, that's just mistrust of God. That's just Eve deciding the fruit's pretty good. I'm going to take it. I want to know what's right and wrong.

So chapter 14, I'm going through pretty quick, right? 12. So keep up. And then what we see here is probably, well, the first war that is recorded in scripture. So let's just call it the first world war for now. And what you see is something really interesting. And suddenly there's a whole list of names, which I will not go through. But what you see here, and I'll try and paint the picture. And honestly, as I was reading this, it reminded me of all the kind of the Chinese TVB episodes that I used to watch of all the battles with empires and kingdoms. And actually this chapter 14 could be made into a movie. And so what happens is, let me just try and briefly go through it. There is an Eastern empire. There is an Eastern empire that is very powerful. That is basically an alliance of four kings. Okay. And let's just tell you the name of the main king, which is Kedorlaoma. Kedorlaoma, king of Elam, is the head of the snake for this Eastern empire. If you fast forward to modern day, that is actually modern day in the area of Iraq and Iran. Okay. So an Eastern empire that is incredibly powerful, four kings are ruling over five cities. Okay. Who have their own kings, but they are paying taxes to these four kings. Okay. So these five little kingdoms are basically under the authority of these four kings. Are we okay so far? Okay. So what happens is they've been paying taxes all these times, verse four, for 12 years, they have been serving King Kedorlaoma.

And in the 13th year, they've decided they've had enough. The taxes are too high. Wait, why can't we run our own kingdoms? Why do we have to follow this Eastern empire? So they rebel. When

they rebel, these four kings decide to come and clamp them out. So what happens is these four kings led by Kedorlaoma, they head towards the five rebel cities. Before they get to the rebel cities, actually, their strategy is that they would actually surround these rebel cities. So they will take, they will basically surround, so they actually go around the side. And whilst they're going around the side, there's actually another five nomadic tribes that they take over. So they were trying to regain power of these five kingdoms, but in doing so, they not only get the five kingdoms, they actually get another six surrounding tribes around it. So these guys are powerful.

And, but what happens is they encircle these rebel cities. And in the middle, what happens is these rebel cities, the five, if you look in verse eight, there's a list of them. The king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Adma, the king of Zoboim, and the king of Bela, they are all the five rebel cities. So the Eastern empire surrounds them, takes over the tribes around, and then causes such fear that actually the five rebel cities, their kings, a lot of them actually die in a pit of tar. So it's a bad situation for them. But for the Eastern empire, it's great, because now they had five, and now they have 11. So this is a very, very powerful army is all we need to say.

[23:09] But they make one mistake. They make one mistake. Chapter 14, verse 12. They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom. Remember, the guy who saw from afar, but eventually ends up right in the heart of evil. He was dwelling in Sodom and his possessions and went their way. And here is where the story turns. So if this is a movie, that little, but that battle bit is probably the first 20 to 30 minutes. But then there's a scene where they take Lot, the nephew of Abram. And then suddenly it's this moment where Abram, who at this point probably looks a little bit like Liam Neeson. Okay. And he finds out, someone tells him that his nephew Lot has been taken by the evil, powerful Eastern empire. And Abram, remember Liam Neeson's face here. Every Liam Neeson movie applies.

He looks and he goes, whoa, you can take all the other kingdoms, but you can't take my nephew. I have a set of skills and I will seek you and I will find you and I will kill you Eastern empire.

So I can take my nephew back is what he says. So what does Abram do? He takes 318 of his men. It's almost comical because on one hand you're like, oh, that's a lot of men.

Remember we're dealing with one of those powerful empires of the time. It's not enough. It's almost comical that they wrote 318. So this is just a little bit more than Sparta.

And he takes these 318 herdsman who were trained by Abram himself. But just stop there for a second. Why is Abram Liam Neeson? Why is Abram so courageous and so brave in going, you can't take my nephew.

[25:09] I'm going to come and get you. Remember, this is the same guy who gave up his wife to a Pharaoh who was actually a nice guy because Pharaoh ended up letting him take everything back.

But these evil kings, somehow he has the courage to stand up. You see, Abram is starting to grow. This founder of the faith is growing up before our eyes. He's starting to make choices. He's not going to be perfect.

We're going to find out later. He doesn't always make good choices, but we start to see that he's learning how to trust in God. So he takes his 318 men and he goes and fights this eastern empire that now has 11 tribes, 11 kingdoms under its authority.

And so then you see here, verse 14, when Abram heard that his kingsmen had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men and he went in pursuit. And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and he surrounds them again at night. He jumps them.

Remember that there's no electricity during that time of human history. So when it's nighttime, it's dark. So probably what happened is Abram with his 318 surround them, ambush them at night, cause confusion.

[26:16] Remember, these guys were evil people. So the likelihood is they've won this battle. They are completely high. They are celebrating. They are drunk and they are completely hungover. So then Abram with his 318 surround them at nighttime, ambush them.

And what would have happened is they wouldn't be able to see who is who. And so it probably just caused absolute chaos and carnage. And that's probably how they ended up getting defeated. So Abram, this herdsman, this wealthy one, ends up defeating the whole Eastern empire.

Isn't that amazing that if God is for you, then none can really be against. You can see suddenly Abram becomes so courageous that he launches this rescue mission just for his nephew. And we'll talk a little bit more about that later.

And so he wins. He takes everything. He takes everything and he starts heading back. Verse 17. After his return from the defeat of Kedalohoma and the kings who were with him, as he's heading back with everything, his nephew and all the possessions of all the kingdoms, two kings, two of the rebel city kings who were saved by Abram, they come out. They come out and meet him in the valley and they have a conversation with him. And this is where it gets really fascinating. You have these two people who come representing two very different approaches to life. And they come and have two very different conversations to Abram. [27 : 34] And they've made very different choices. And Abram ends up making another choice here that we can see where his growth is coming from. So what happens first is, let's see. So, verse 17.

The king of Sodom, whose name was Bera, by the way. If you look at the beginning of chapter 14. Bera, coincidentally, the word means evil. It means wicked. So the king of Sodom comes out. And then King Melchizedek also comes out.

Melchizedek, king of Salem. Salem, the word means peace. Melchizedek, the word itself means, the name itself means righteousness. So you have a king of evil, Sodom. And then you have King Melchizedek, king of righteousness.

They both approach Abram. Interestingly, Melchizedek isn't mentioned in the rebel cities before.

Actually, Melchizedek is a very mysterious character that actually goes all the way.

You find a lot more about him in the New Testament. And actually, to this day, we still don't truly know who he is. If you look at Hebrews 5 to 7, you'll find a lot of information about this priestly king. So he wasn't just a king.

[28 : 34] And he wasn't just a priest. He was both. You also don't find him causing rebellion. So he's kind of a man of God, a king of God, who kind of is minding his own business. You also see in Psalm 110, a mention of this priest in the form of Melchizedek.

So we don't really know much about him. And this is really the only interaction we see. So just imagine with me, Abram's coming with all the possessions from the war. And all the 318 men. And actually, he had some neighbors who actually helped him too. And then they were all walking. And then the king of Sodom, Bera, and the king, Melchizedek, they come towards him. Scripture then tells us what happens.

Melchizedek is the one who speaks first. And so we'll follow what he says here. He comes and he brings out bread and wine. We're sat here going, oh, bread and wine.

I know, that's the communion. No, this wasn't the communion. This was actually, in his eyes, probably just actually feeding him. Feeding the 318 men and the neighbors. Because why? Because they're probably exhausted. They're tired. This is just a goodwill gesture saying, hey, you guys must be exhausted and starving.

[29 : 36] Here's some food. Let me look after you. And then he actually comes out with a blessing. Remember, he's king and he's a priest. 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 then Abram gives him a tenth of everything. And so this king comes with gratitude, comes with food, comes with nourishment, and just blesses God. And what is he saying?

He's like, Abram, you are a powerful, powerful man. But the reason why you're a powerful, powerful man is because you have the favor of God. You only won this because of God. And so I'm here just to acknowledge that. I'm here to give you bread and wine.

This is a peace offering. This is me just saying thank you for saving me and my people. And Abram just reciprocates and he gives him a tenth of everything. But then you contrast that with the king of Sodom, Mbera.

This is the guy who was in hiding, whose fellow kings died in the pit of tar. But somehow he managed to escape. He's probably hiding in a cave for quite a while until he finds out from somewhere that this Eastern empire has been defeated.

[30 : 40] And he comes out and what's the first thing he says? Verse 21, the king of Sodom said to Abram, give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself. This guy just saved your life.

This guy just saved your kingdom. And you have the audacity to walk out with your chest high saying, give me my people and I'll let you keep the things that you took.

Can you see the two different, the contrasting spirits, the contrasting approaches that these two kings have? Barah comes with entitlement.

He comes already with ambition. He's like, you know what? You can take the possessions. Those aren't that meaningful. What I want are people to rule over. What I want is power. Give me my people back so I can rule over them so they can serve me.

And you can have all the people. You see the entitlement. You see the cowardice. To not even be able to acknowledge that this person saved him and his people. And what he also comes out with is his transactions.

[31:40] You give me this and I'll give you this. As if he was in any place for any kind of negotiation. And yet you see that is the way of the wicked. When they don't show any gratitude.

When they still feel they are entitled. And I wonder where we are as we look at these two kings. Because we too have been recipients of a rescue mission.

When we approach the king who rescued us. The person who rescued us. Do we come with a spirit of gratitude. Of blessing. Of acknowledgement of how powerful he is. Or do we come with entitlement and say, okay, fine.

You saved me now. Give me the things that I want. I wonder. I just wonder where we are. How do we approach God? Do we approach him saying, God, look, I know you saved my life from eternal fire.

But what I'd really like is that girl. I know that I get to experience you and the joy that comes with being you. In your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

[32:41] But I really just want to satisfy myself tonight. That's all it is. I wonder whether we come with that spirit of entitlement. If you keep pulling the thread of what sin is.

We always get back to the same place. Just a mistrust of God. God, I don't trust that you'll actually give me what I want or what I need. So I'm going to go take it for myself. Or do we come with the spirit of King Melchizedek?

With gratitude and worship. Abram, interestingly, makes a good decision again. So when Abram receives the offer, the transaction from the king of Sodom, Abram says this, verse 22.

I have lifted my hand to the Lord, most 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 say I have made Abram rich.

Whereas Lot compromised, Abram does not.

He's like, I don't want any of your stuff. I don't want you to even think that I'm where I am because of you. I am not going to compromise at all. You see, I think Abram has the strength and resilience to resist the king of Sodom's offer because he's already satisfied by the bread and wine that came from King Melchizedek.

[33:55] He's already satisfied with the worship that comes and he realizes where this is all from. So he refuses. He doesn't need the distractions. He doesn't need the deception.

He doesn't need the entitlement of what the world can offer. And so he resists and he says, thank you, but no thank you. But do let the neighbors who have helped us out, let them have what they had, let them eat what they need to do and let them go.

And then that's where the story ends. Can you see these stories, whether it's Abram a lot, whether it's the Eastern Empire and the rebel cities, or whether it's King Bera or King Melchizedek, can you see life is just about choices?

Life is just about us making the choices to trust God or to not trust God. It goes all the way back to Genesis chapter three, when God says to the serpent that there will be two groups of people, one that trust me and one that don't. And that's all it is.

And I wonder whether we can take the stories from today and go, well, where are the compromises that I'm having in my life? Where are the places where I'm deciding, you know what, God, I can't trust you, so I'm just going to make my own decisions, and I'm going to take matters into my own hands.

[35:01] You know, I'm just going to compromise a little bit. You know, that looks way better. I want that instead. Instead of going to God, God, show me where to look. Because you know best, your thoughts and your ways are higher than mine. You show me.

I think I've learned enough. I've sang the goodness of God enough now to know that all my life, you have been faithful. And that your goodness and your mercy will follow me, and not the other way around. Can we be in that place where we can make those choices and say, today, God, not even

just today, this morning, God, I'm going to trust you.

I'm walking back into my office, dealing with my boss, and I'm going to trust you. Take whatever you want, colleagues who are fighting with me in this dog-eat-dog world. Take whatever you want, because my chosen portion is from God.

Because I have no good thing apart from him. So I'm just going to trust, and you do whatever you want. Can we make those choices that Abram did? It's interesting.

These stories, they're just almost mythical. They're so far-fetched almost. And you wonder why they're even here. And I happen to believe this book, this is why we just simply go through this book when we preach, is because I think all of this book points to one thing, one person.

[36 : 14] That is the person of Jesus Christ. You see the trust that Abram has here is in God. You see that he doesn't rely on his own eyes, but he looks to something further.

And then you see when he sees his nephew who didn't do that way, and actually needed rescuing, what you then see is the foreshadowing of a rescue mission, where one person was willing to sacrifice his comfort to go and save his nephew out of love.

And what we see there is Jesus doing the same thing. It's laid out in Philippians 2. Jesus, though, who was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Abram was just foreshadowing what Jesus would do for us. Sacrificing, putting everything at risk to go and save one.

When actually, he could have gone to Lot and said, well, you know what? He made his choice.

Sucks to be him. You know, I tried. But he didn't. And thank God Jesus didn't do that with us.

[37 : 24] Sucks to be those guys. Look, I've made my presence known. Romans 1, it says this.

You look at creation, it's pretty hard to say that no one created this. The beauty of the world, nature.

He's like, look, I've made myself known through creation. If they don't choose me, they don't choose me. And God says, no, I love them that much that I'm still going to go chase after them. I'm still going to send my son on a rescue mission to save them from the evil empire.

Now we get to choose. Do we choose to follow the king of evil? Or do we choose to follow the king of righteousness? Do we stay entitled and keep asking God for transactions and negotiations?

Or do we just go to him with gratitude and worship and build altars and say, God, you lead the way. Everything is yours. I trust you. It's funny. King Melchizedek, as he comes with the bread and wine to feed the men, what he doesn't realize is that many, many years later, there's another man that sits holding bread and holding wine.

Talking about the moment where he's going to complete the rescue mission. Where he's going to head to the cross. Break down any dividing walls of hostility between people or between people and God.

[38 : 39] And he's going to preach peace and bring them all back. And he uses the bread and he uses the wine to say we are now in communion again with God.

Can you see that these stories are just pointing to Jesus? Can you see that our stories also point to Jesus? Can you look back and see your story and go, man, Jesus.

And if you can't, don't worry. That's my prayer for all of us. That just like Abram, we would grow.

Just like Abram, we would start to make better choices.

That every day we'd become more aware that every circumstance, whether it's simply choosing a fund to invest in or a place to go for dinner or a career to choose, every decision we make, if we did it from a place where, God, I just obey and I just trust you.

Then we will see the goodness of God completely shower over us. And we know that because it's the same God that gave his own son to die for us. Let's spend a final moment of reflection now.

[39 : 53] Whether it's to look back and go, God, wow, all those decisions have been about me trusting or obeying you. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I often regularly choose the wrong way.

The grace here is that God doesn't really mind. It's like my children. When they come to me, they've made mistakes. All I want is for them just to come to tell me, to be willing to embrace and hug me.

Or you look at the present right now and go, I am trapped between two decisions. I'm trapped in a family feud. I am trapped in which investments to make. I am trapped to see which way to go.

I'm trapped in all these things. Why don't you decide today? I'm just going to make the choice that allows me to trust God more. Which of these is me trusting God? And which of these is me trusting

myself? Or me trusting my boss?

Or trusting my career? Or trusting my field? Or trusting the markets? Or trusting my friendships?

Which of these is me trusting God? Let me choose that way today. Because if we choose that way, God's promise to Abram extends to us.

[41:04] That's the beauty of it. It's not even just the juice. It's to all of us. Should we choose the trust? Spend a moment now just to reflect.

And then the worship team will lead us in a song. Amen. So Lord, we build our altar this morning to you.

We call upon your name. The God of Abraham. The God of promises.

And we're coming on to the truth that you and your promises, there is only a yes and an amen.

Why? Because of Jesus. So we put our faith in him. Our anchor to the ground. So that whether it's decisions at work or in the family, or in any aspect of our lives, we need only ask one question.

[42:24] Lord, would you help us trust you more? And maybe we finish now with just asking that question one final time. You know what battles you face.

Maybe it's not against an Eastern empire. Maybe it's not to do with a business feud. Or maybe it is.

Why don't we, as his children, ask our loving, powerful father, how can we trust you more today?

Let's just spend a moment to wait on him. As a church, would we be commissioned to go, to scatter, and trust that we would make choices, the small ones and the big ones, to trust in him today?

If the mistrust of God is what caused us to head down this slippery slope, may I cast a vision in front of you today? What if we all chose to trust him again?

I think the curse of sin would be reversed. If we chose to trust him and his love, then his love covers the multitude of sins.

[44:05] It drives out the fear. Could we just leave here being people of trust? May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May his favour shine upon you. Amen.