

For GC Discussion

- What can we learn from the way God confirms His promise to Abraham, and what He says to him while doing so?
- In what ways can we identify with trying to fulfil the promises of God ourselves, and how can we prevent ourselves even trying?
- How does the truth that we are justified by faith affect our day to day lives?

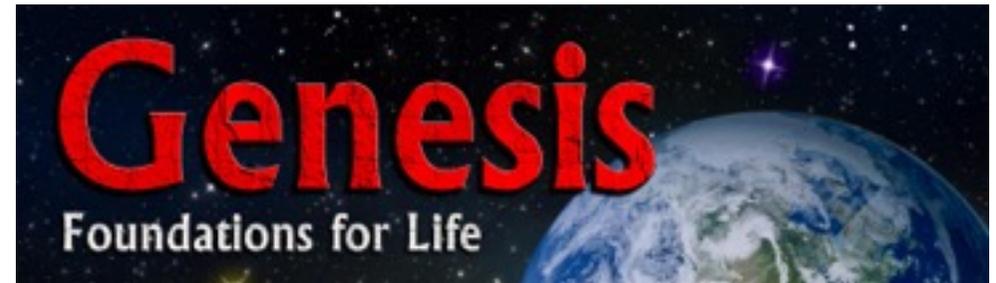
For the Kids

What does it mean to be 'justified' by God and how can we get this amazing gift?

In 2 Weeks: we will look at the sign of God's covenant with Abram and Abram's continued obedience of faith. (Chs 17-18).

Notes and Questions

For Worship: Listen to '**Great is Your Faithfulness**' by Martin Smith. You can find it on YouTube, or on the Hill City Church blog on the website.



Week 8: Abraham Pt2: Confirmation - Chs 14-16

This Weeks Summary

This week see God remarkably confirming His promise to Abram, and yet we see Abram taking matters into his own hands and attempting to fulfil the promise of God his own way.

For Study:

- Read **Hebrews 6:13-20** and **Deuteronomy 7:6-11** which talk of the faithfulness of God to fulfil His promises, and our response to those promises.
- Read **Judges chapters 6-7** and **Matthew 12:38-42** - two contrasting ways God chooses to deal with people wanting confirmation of His promises.
- Read **Romans 4:1-15** and **Romans 9:6-13** speaking of what it really means to be justified, and a true child of Abraham.
- Read **Galatians chapters 3-4** speaking of the contrast between law and grace, flesh and spirit.

This week we have continued to focus on the big-picture promise that God made to Abraham in chapter 12 - here is something else of what has been going on in these few chapters:

1. The Nations Rage

Chapter 14 brings us a seemingly random event where kings from the east come to quash a rebellion of kings from the west (including Sodom). It seems completely unconnected to the main storyline, except for the fact that it includes 2 of our main characters from chapters 12 and 13 - Abram and Lot. This brief account teaches us something profound though - in the middle of a world where kingdom still rises against kingdom, and the political landscape is still constantly changing, the God who rules over it all is primarily concerned with the lives and the faith of His children, and He is constantly using the actions of secular, pagan nations to accomplish His great purpose of building His church and sanctifying His people. You and I may often feel less than insignificant in the hugeness of the world, but be assured we worship a God to whom we are incredibly significant, and a God who is using any and every situation for our good.

2. A consequence for Lot's actions?

We have to be a bit careful connecting everything bad that happens in our lives to the bad decisions and sin that is in our lives, however many people connect Lot being taken captive by the kings of the east directly with his foolish and selfish decision to choose the best land close to Sodom. We now see that he has been drawn into the city of Sodom itself and no doubt he has already begun to be 'distressed' by the depravity that is around him (2 Peter 2:7). What is clear is that Lot is caught up in the battle because of his choice of land, and Abram is well clear of it. Quite possibly this defeat is part of the judgment of God on the wicked city of Sodom, which culminates in its destruction a few chapters later - had Lot stayed separate from the wickedness he would have avoided the trouble he found himself in. Quite possibly this is also a warning to Lot, showing him the consequences of identifying himself with evil - a warning that sadly he fails to respond to, causing serious consequences for himself and his family. Whatever is going on here, it seems clear that Lot has made a foolish decision, inspired by his greed, selfishness, and fleshly desire for the best that this world has to offer, rather than sticking close to Abram where the blessing of God was clearly resting on his family.

This is such a clear warning for us also - how easy it is to be taken captive simply by the things of this world becoming more important to us. There is

no serious sin in Lot's life - in fact he seems to keep himself separate from the depravity around him pretty well in the years he is living in Sodom - and yet his life is tainted by his decision to pursue worldly prosperity above the blessing of God. There are so many good things we can pursue in this world, but if we're not careful they can subtly take over and we can find ourselves falling short of the purity of simply following God in faith into the amazing plans He has for us.

3. A growing man of faith

The contrast we see between Lot and Abram in chapter 14 is marked. As we've said, Abram isn't caught up in the battle, and where Lot's selfishness has got him in trouble, it is Abram's selflessness that rescues Lot and displays an incredible picture of the grace of God. Lot's foolishness leads him to be caught captive, just as our sin brings us into bondage, and Abram is willing to risk everything (taking only 318 men made him really outnumbered) to rescue him from his predicament. Abram shows amazing love, commitment and sacrifice to set his nephew free, and though Jesus doesn't take any risks as He lays His life down for us, He shows even greater love as He dies to set us free from the bondage our sin has brought us into. There was no necessity laid on Abram to go after Lot, but he makes a choice to show him grace, or undeserved kindness, just as it is the grace of God in Christ to save sinners like us who deserve nothing more than judgment and eternal separation from God for our sin.

The contrast just keeps growing between the 2 in the events that transpire as Abram returns both with Lot and with all the loot that the eastern kings had taken from Sodom. Abram is greeted by the mysterious figure of Melchizedek (hopefully more on him to come later), who amongst other things is a reminder to Abram that his victory is from God, and wasn't won in his own strength alone. Then Abram gives away a part of the spoils he has won to Melchizedek, and follows that up by refusing to even take a penny from the king of Sodom as he offers him the entirety of what he has taken back. We clearly see where the heart of Abram is set - he is not after worldly wealth or success, though God is more than able to give this to him. Primary in Abram's heart is the desire to please God, to walk with Him, and to live in the blessing that He gives. Abram has realised that nothing in this world can begin to compare to the good things that God wants to pour out on His children. We may not practically see those blessings in the here and now, but that doesn't make them any less real, and that's exactly what it means to live by faith - to trust in the God we can't see, and hunger for the blessing that is promised rather than the one right in front of us.